

The Negative Language of the Dionysian School
of Mystical Theology

An Approach to the Cloud of Unknowing

in Two Volumes

Volume One

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to define the relationship of the Cloud of Unknowing and its principal ancillary treatises to the Dionysian tradition of negative mystical theology. The study centres on the mystical vocabulary of these texts and the approach to language as a medium for theological discourse which they embody. Both are grounded in the theology of divine transcendence which characterizes the Dionysian school. The compilation of an appropriate terminology was integral to the evolution of the tradition of negative mysticism and its use continued to distinguish works which allied themselves with this tradition. The development of the principles and vocabulary of Dionysian theology are therefore considered in conjunction with one another and chronologically in connexion with the major exponents of the tradition. The emergence and consolidation of negative mysticism as a properly Christian tradition from hebraic and hellenic sources is treated in relation to Gregory of Nyssa as well as Ps.-Dionysius, with particular emphasis on the role of the latter in determining the form in which the tradition was received by medieval theologians. The study of the transmission of negative theology to the Middle Ages concentrates on the De Mystica Theologia, which constitutes a direct link with the Cloud author, who translated it into English as the Deonise Hid Diuinite. Comparison of the English text with its immediate Latin sources (the versions of Thomas Gallus and Sarracenus) shows the author's literal treatment of Dionysian concepts and vocabulary as the Latin translators had interpreted them. The Deonise Hid Diuinite also provides a valuable index to the author's use of Dionysian material in his original works. His interpretation of Dionysian theology seems to have been influenced in both cases by secondary sources within the same tradition - notably

the Viae Syon Lugent of the Carthusian Hugh of Balma. The thesis concludes with a general, largely speculative chapter which attempts to establish the significance of this study for the issues of provenance, circulation and authorship. Manuscript evidence and the texts' theological affinities with the particular development of the Dionysian mystical tradition represented by Hugh of Balma seem to connect the author closely with the Carthusian order.

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>A.H.D.L.M.A.</u>	<u>Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge</u>
<u>Chev.</u>	ed. P. Chevallier, <u>Dionysiaca. Recueil donnant l'ensemble des traductions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys l'Aréopage</u> (Paris, 1937)
<u>Cloud</u>	<u>Cloud of Unknowing</u> , ed. P. Hodgson, " <u>The Cloud of Unknowing</u> " and " <u>The Book of Privy Counselling</u> " (E.E.T.S., O.S. 218, 1944, reprinted 1973)
<u>D.H.D.</u>	<u>Deonise Hid Diuinite</u> , ed. P. Hodgson, " <u>Deonise Hid Diuinite</u> " and other Treatises on Contemplative Prayer related to " <u>The Cloud of Unknowing</u> " (E.E.T.S., 231, 1955, reprinted 1958)
<u>D.N.</u>	<u>De Divinis Nominibus</u> , P.G. III, col. 585-996
<u>D.S.A.M.</u>	<u>Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ancien et Médiévale</u>
<u>E.C.</u>	<u>Essays in Criticism</u>
<u>E.E.T.S.</u>	Early English Text Society
<u>E.S.</u>	<u>Essays and Studies</u>
<u>F.G.T.G.</u>	J. Daniélou, tr. H. Musurillo, <u>From Glory to Glory. Texts from Gregory of Nyssa</u> (London, 1962)
<u>F.S.T.R.</u>	J. Daniélou, tr. W. Hibberd, <u>From Shadows to Reality. Studies in the Typology of the Fathers</u> (London, 1960)
<u>M.Aev.</u>	<u>Medium Aevum</u>
<u>M.E.D.</u>	Middle English Dictionary
<u>M.S.</u>	<u>Mediaeval Studies</u>
<u>M.Th.</u>	<u>De Mystica Theologia</u> , Chev.I, 565-602
<u>N.M.</u>	<u>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</u>
<u>O.E.D.</u>	Oxford English Dictionary
<u>P.C.</u>	<u>The Book of Privy Counselling</u> (E.E.T.S., O.S. 218)
<u>P. et T.M.</u>	J. Daniélou, <u>Platonisme et Théologie Mystique</u> (Paris, 1944)
<u>P.G.</u>	ed. J.-P. Migne, <u>Patrologia, series graeca</u> (Paris, 1857 ff.)
<u>P.L.</u>	ed. J.-P. Migne, <u>Patrologia, series latina</u> (Paris, 1844 ff.)
<u>R.A.M.</u>	<u>Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique</u>
<u>R.T.A.M.</u>	<u>Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale</u>
<u>T.R.H.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</u>

INTRODUCTION

The subject of religious language has been debated amply and from widely differing standpoints by philologists, philosophers and theologians. It is accordingly difficult to treat it in a summary or partial fashion, and particularly so since religious language cannot properly be considered as an autonomous medium, with forms and functions of its own, apart from language as it operates in other situations. As one writer has observed,

... a great many of the expressions which find a place in religious utterance, in fact the vast majority of such expressions, derive their sense from their use in other and nonreligious contexts ... Nor does religion confer on such expressions a new and esoteric meaning.¹

Its terms, that is, do not constitute a code, nor do they function otherwise than words in normal discourse. It has often been recognised, for example, that religious language has special affinities with abstract language, insofar as its referent is insubstantial, and that the manipulation of the connotative properties of words by writers of religious prose is sometimes akin to poetic usage.

The particular circumstances of Christian theology, however, undoubtedly impose special conditions on language and the strong biblical tradition has perpetuated attitudes to language and specific forms of expression which accommodate the demands of Christian doctrine. The idea of the word, indeed, is itself integral to the central tenets of the Christian faith. In O.T. theology, the Hebrew notion of 'dabhar' ('word') supplies the Genesis compiler's metaphor for the divine act of creation. The primitive connexions of word with event or potency

are sublimated into a sophisticated system for comprehending and formulating God's entire creative and redemptive activity towards man with the identification of Christ as the incarnate *Logos* ('Word') in the Johannine Gospel. St. John attempts to understand the Incarnation, to establish its significance within a coherent divine plan for creation, by bringing to bear the concept of *logos* as it had evolved in Greek philosophy upon Hebraic religious tradition.² Briefly, the term *logos* incorporates a suggestion of revelation; it applies, in platonist contexts, to the rational principle on which the universe is held to operate and to the corresponding faculty whereby man perceives its logic and cohesiveness. The development of the idea in Christian neoplatonist thought is described by Thomas Tomasic in his article, "Negative Theology and Subjectivity. An Approach to the Tradition of Pseudo-Dionysius":

the existence of God never becomes a conclusion deduced from prior premises, as though there could be any prior ground: it is, rather, the existence of God that makes all logical inference not only possible but intelligible. Any theory which implies that God is known as a conclusion derived from inference is simply non-cognizant of the operative logos functioning as the metaphysical matrix of all intelligibility.³

The Johannine designation of Christ as *Logos* thus affirms the continuity of the divine scheme by resuming the O.T. figure of the creative word ('dabhar') and postulates, further, that it is manifested and made in some sense intelligible by the fact of the Incarnation. It also re-asserts the status of the Word as intermediary between God and man - though, in both cases, the implied differentiation between God and the Word is checked by the avowal that they are simultaneously one: the sense in Genesis that the Word is at once the instrument of creation, and thus distinct from God, but also a metaphor which expresses the

essential creativity of the divine being, is made explicit with regard to Christ in St. John's Gospel ('In principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat verbum'(John 1.1)).

The mediatory function which is inherent in the concept of the Word on a figurative level, however, is also fundamental to the literal sense of 'word', and the O.T. records many instances of God's direct intervention in human affairs through actual speech. The audibility of God's words is emphasized in the account of His call to Samuel (I Samuel 3.1-14), for example, where Samuel mistakes God's voice for Eli's on three occasions. In theological terms, narratives such as this seem to invest language with a special significance as a means of communication between God and man. The divine authority behind the transmission of God's message by the writers of the O.T. prophetic books, moreover, has traditionally been allowed to imbue scriptural language with a peculiar relevance and power. This underlies the exegetical approach to biblical narrative and the method of figural interpretation⁴: the exposition of the Canticle and the book of Exodus in particular has established them as major sources for mystical theology and vocabulary.

This kind of approach to religious discourse has been said to demand a sympathetic attitude, a predisposition to admit the doctrinal principles which determine its character and function, on the part of theological writers and their audience. I.T. Ramsey, for example, has urged that "discernment" and "commitment" are prerequisites for the proper application and appreciation of language in the context of Christian theology.⁵ The tendency of such arguments, however, is to

blur distinctions between different usages of language which are embraced by the generic term "religious". They are apt, also, to absolve the theologian from the responsibility of speaking intelligibly to the unbiassed understanding of the reader, though exploitation of the traditional resonances of biblical language is both legitimate and effective in discourse on religious subjects. The range of mystical language which is the concern of this thesis certainly profits by these resonances, but it is, besides, in its own way logically accountable. Its referents - the theme of divine transcendence and the union of the soul with God as they are represented in Dionysian theology - are located beyond the scope of the human intelligence and are inaccessible to all natural faculties of perception. The shift in perspective from phenomenal to transcendent objects involves, in linguistic terms, a transposition of the normal meaning of words to a higher plane. But, it should be stressed, the normal meaning persists, and is, indeed, the foundation for the sense of the word in its new situation, and mystical language derives its coherency from the manipulation of verbal functions which make language viable in other contexts.

The Johannine concept of Christ as the incarnation of the divine *Λογος*, in fact, suggests that language has a specific role in religious situations which is integral to the substance of N.T. theology. It endorses the general sanction for language as a means of communication between God and man and, hence, between men which is embedded in O.T. theology. *Λογος*, however, as a term of philosophy, is connected with the principle of intelligence and it implies that the faculty of language is emblematic of man's distinction from other creatures in the possession of rationality. The gospel writer retains the O.T. formula of the Word ('*dabhar*') as intermediary between the divine

essence and creation: Christ as the embodiment of *Logos*, John infers, represents a kind of bridge between Absolute God and humanity. But the term *Logos* intimates, further, that creation and Christ himself, to the extent that he participated in human nature, are within the scope of the intellect and properly compatible, therefore, with language, whereas the pure essence of God exceeds the normal range of both. Thus language is entirely appropriate as a medium for symbolic theology, for example, which is similarly dependent on the intellect as a means of arriving at knowledge of God insofar as it is accessible by analogy with creation.

By the same token, however, language, though it is indispensable for communication, is essentially inadequate as a vehicle for mystical theology and even antithetical to the precise formulation of the transcendent nature of God and the soul's mystical encounter with Him. The tendency of Dionysian theology is fundamentally reductive: its object, that is, is an experience of union between the soul and the essential being of God in which the dichotomy which persists even when the soul has receded from all external phenomena and from the extraneous elements of self is, as far as possible, overcome. In its reversion to singleness, both within the individual soul and between the soul and God, the mystic way is thus radically opposed to the process of intellection, which presumes a distinction between the perceiver and the object of perception. The consequent negative dialectic of Dionysian theology is explained against its background of neoplatonist philosophy by Tomasic:

The question, then, of the transcendent self, as opposed to the phenomenal self or atria, necessitates a mode of approach which increasingly prescind from exteriority, objectivity or 'otherness'. The serious depth of the

via negativa, via remotionis or apophatike, is seen in the fact that it is the destruction of the last illusion of reason and objectivity. The process of néantisation cuts across all categories pretending objectivity, none of which permits raising the primal question. Intellect, the specialized aspect of the self as a form of consciousness properly directed towards objectivity, must be completely discarded as ineffectual. The neo-Platonist is acutely aware that the function of intellect is existentially direct to objects and can evoke only the dimension of objectivity; 'at home' in this relation, it ceases to be when subjectivity emerges as primal instress and logic becomes defunct. The way of negation is essentially a purgation, an asceticism, indispensable for attaining subjectivity. Due to the spatio-temporal imagery inseparable from human thinking, no direct approach to interiority is accessible to intellect; the only accessibility is given by the purgation of all modes of limitation, objectivity and reasoning. Since all intellectual knowledge bears on being, and every being is limited, then, by consequence, that which stands beyond being stands also beyond knowledge - it is beyond knowable (ὑπεράγνωστον) because it is beyond limit. One is confronted with the intellectually inaccessible and unimaginable.

Néantisation is not a departure from what may be called 'experience'; it is an intensification of experience in its ground. The function of the via negativa is not merely the negation of objectivity qua objectivity but very consciously the negation of subjectivity qua objectivity. In rejecting every aspect of objectivity as 'otherness', the way of negation asserts by the simplest dialectic the radical, ontological 'otherness' of subjectivity over against what is not. The via negativa establishes 'another knowledge'. What, therefore, is brilliantly achieved is, in fact, an absolute and sophisticated grasp of approaching subjectivity qua subjectivity in the negation of quid esse.⁶

The concept of language as a function of the intellect, which became integral to Christian theology through the adaptation of the philosophical theory of λογος in the Johannine Gospel and accrued significance in Dionysian theology from both Christian and neoplatonist sources, thus requires that metaphor rather than literalism should be the dominant mode of mystical discourse. It entails, further, the ascendancy of the negative over the positive idiom in the same context. Negation is both a means of distinguishing mystical experience from other acts of cognition - "unknowing" from "knowing", for example -

and a corrective to misleading propositions about the being of God. The very process of ascribing attributes to God entertains as a possibility that the divine nature can be circumscribed in human concepts and terms, and this, from a theological standpoint, is wholly untenable. The negative dialectic excludes all restrictive connotations and serves to emphasize God's transcendence in both respects. It also obviates the tendency of positive attributes to imply pluralism in God, since epithets such as "great", "good" and even "one", belong to a relative rather than an absolute vocabulary.

The vocabulary of negative mysticism is thus inalienable from its doctrinal basis. It evolved with the formalisation of the principles of Dionysian theology, and the intention of the present thesis, following this rudimentary account of the particular circumstances of religious and, specifically, mystical discourse, is to study its development in close conjunction with the mystical literature which expounds the theory. The negative dialectic assumed, in fact, the status of a technical vocabulary: it is not so much a vehicle for expressing the immediacy and intensity of individual mystical experience as a logical system for denoting the fact of divine transcendence and the contemplative theory which ensues from this theological proposition. It is a premise of this dissertation that the fourteenth century English author of the Cloud of Unknowing formulated his personal intuition of the contemplative way according to the principles of Dionysian apophatic theology and, consequently, adopted the vocabulary associated with the Dionysian mystical tradition in his account of it. It is a coherent terminology which corresponds precisely to the theological position, though it is not, he makes clear in the Book of Privy Counselling, the only possible linguistic

mode for conveying an experience which is independent of all concept and expression:

For þis same werk, 3if it be verrelly conceyuid, is þat reuerent affeccion & þe frute departid fro þe tre þat I speke of in þi lityl pistle of preier. þis is þe cloude of vnknowyng; þis is þat priue loue put in purete of spirit: þis is þe Arke of þe Testament. þis is Denis deuinite, his wisdom & his drewry, his lizty derknes & his vnknowyn kunnynges. þis is it þat settip þee in silence as wele fro þou3tes as fro wordes. (P.C. 154/13-19).⁷

The decision to make the Christian neoplatonist writer Gregory of Nyssa the starting point for this study of the Dionysian mystical tradition is largely pragmatic. The extent and occasionally even the existence of his influence on Ps.-Dionysius' theology have been challenged, and the purpose of the present enquiry into his work is not to enter into the controversy on these questions and still less to imply that Gregory's impact on Dionysian thought in general was crucial. The Dionysian Corpus is eclectic and its philosophical and theological background is, in consequence, extraordinarily complex. It is also, however, disconcertingly cryptic. The author clearly assumes that his readers will appreciate the intellectual and religious context of his work, and he incorporates without elucidation ideas and terms which would presumably have been readily intelligible within the milieu of contemporary Christian neoplatonism. One possible approach to the Dionysian Corpus which takes account of these circumstances is exemplified in the work of Stephen Gersh: the introduction to his recently published book on the subject includes a summary assessment of Ps.-Dionysius' position in Christian-neoplatonist tradition and puts the case for studying the Corpus against the background of specific trends in neoplatonist philosophy:

The historical significance of Ps.-Dionysius stems from the fact that his doctrine is the first Christian version of a type of Neoplatonic philosophy taught mainly in the two centres of learning, Athens and Alexandria, from approximately the fourth to the sixth century A.D. Earlier Christian writers such as Augustine in the West and Gregory of Nyssa in the East had followed Neoplatonic doctrine, but the evidence suggests that they had been influenced by earlier phases of development. In Ps.-Dionysius, however, we have a transmitter of the dominant philosophy of late Antiquity in its most elaborate and developed form. This school of thought can be traced back to Iamblichus who therefore furnishes a suitable starting point for an enquiry.⁸

Gersh's research presents Ps.-Dionysius as a Christian who systematically transformed pagan thought. He acknowledges the contribution which writers such as Gregory of Nyssa made to the composition of Dionysian theology, though this is not the focus of his treatment of the Greek Corpus:

Ps.-Dionysius was not the first Christian philosopher, and it goes without saying that some of his deviations from the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus or Proclus were occasioned not by his own reflections alone but by the work of earlier theologians, especially the Cappadocian fathers.⁹

Gersh's approach to the Dionysian Corpus and that adopted in the present context are, in fact, in many ways complementary. The emphasis here on the aspect of the background to the Corpus represented by Gregory of Nyssa reflects the bias of the thesis as a whole, which is towards negative theology as the cornerstone of a Christian mystical tradition. The affinities between the two writers in respect of certain fundamental principles of Christian mystical theology are salient, and coincide with some of the areas which are of primary concern in this thesis. Gregory's claim to consideration in the context of Dionysian studies consists partly in his anticipation of Ps.-Dionysius on these points, and partly also in his tenure of a position of orthodoxy against which the particular developments of

Dionysian theology may be properly quantified. More importantly, however, Gregory expounds at length the biblical sources for his mystical theory and vocabulary; his exegetical works define within a coherent scheme concepts which Ps.-Dionysius treats only allusively and terminology which he includes without specific explanation.

The discussion of Ps.-Dionysius concentrates on his principal mystical work, the De Mystica Theologia. This is also the focus of the third section of the thesis, which is, however, proportionately less preoccupied with the theoretical aspect of mystical language insofar as Dionysian vocabulary early acquired a technical standing as the traditional mode of negative theology. It rather traces the transition of mystical doctrine and terminology through the various Latin translations produced during the Middle Ages and down to the fourteenth century English version ascribed to the Cloud author, the Deonise Hid Diuinite. The study of the translators' handling of Dionysian vocabulary involves consideration of method and intent, as well as of the linguistic resources which Latin and, later, English afforded. It also entails, however, close analysis of the developments in Dionysian mystical theology which were formulated in the vast body of medieval literature associated with the Dionysian tradition. The works of the Victorine abbot Thomas Gallus and of the Carthusian prior Hugh of Balma have merited special consideration in this connexion, since the particular interpretation of Dionysian theology which they propound seems to have shaped the Cloud author's contemplative theory and consequently, therefore, his application of the traditional vocabulary of negative mysticism.

The mystical vocabulary of the Cloud itself has been largely

approached through the Deonise Hid Diuinite, since the De Mystica Theologia is its major source and the study of the author's method as a translator provides many insights into his understanding of its terminology. The Deonise Hid Diuinite also serves as a standard by which to judge the manner and frequency with which, in his original works, the author uses or evades the technical vocabulary of Dionysian theology which was demonstrably available to him. His practice in this respect in Cloud and Privy Counsel - the treatise most closely related to Cloud and Deonise Hid Diuinite, and thus of equal concern with them in this thesis - is revealing of his priorities as an author and an indication of the degree to which his responsiveness to the requirements and limitations of his prospective audience determined the character of his work.

The final section reaffirms the pervasive influence of Dionysian theology on the Cloud author's thought and expression, and explores the application and some of the possible implications of the study of Cloud within the precise context of the Dionysian mystical tradition. My submission is that the extent and, perhaps more tellingly, the nature of the Cloud author's achievement are fully estimable only with due appreciation of the theological and allied literary background of the texts. The inferences drawn from this study, moreover, have an important bearing on research into tangential issues concerning the circulation, authorship and probable provenance of the Cloud Corpus.

CHAPTER I

GREGORY OF NYSSA (c.330-95)

I. Theology: the character and background

St. Gregory of Nyssa was a dominant figure in the eastern church of the fourth century. As Bishop of Nyssa he enjoyed great political as well as ecclesiastical power, and he had an influential voice in some of the major theological controversies of his time.¹ He was also drawn to contemplation as an ideal, however, and much of his work as an exegete was directed to furnishing the newly-founded monastic movement in Cappadocia with a substantial literature expounding the theological basis for the contemplative life.²

His importance in the development of the Christian mystical tradition seems, in fact, to have been determined by the circumstances of his individual spiritual temper and its interaction with the religious and intellectual milieu of contemporary Cappadocia. His principal works, the Commentary on the Canticle and the Life of Moses (both written c.389), express a profound Christian faith and a thorough familiarity with the Judaic tradition of biblical scholarship. At the same time, he is heir to a strong tradition of neo-platonist thought, which impressed itself both negatively and positively on his theology: he recognized, that is, that the vigour and acumen for which it merited respect also represented an immediate threat to the consolidation of the Christian church in the East. He was also eloquent in his defence of the orthodox church when its dogma of divine transcendence was challenged by the intellectualist Eunomian heresy. Gregory's position has been summarized by Jean Daniélou, S.J.:

L'oeuvre de Grégoire de Nysse est à un croisement de pensée très intéressant. D'une part, par son côté spéculatif, elle se rattache à la doctrine des grands alexandrins, à toute une mystique intellectuelle, contemplative dont elle est un exemple remarquable. Mais par ailleurs Grégoire est le frère de Basile, le législateur de la vie monastique. Il est le contemporain de l'éclosion du monachisme. Tout un côté de son oeuvre s'apparente à celle des Pères du Désert, à cette psychologie pratique de la vie spirituelle, des tentations, des consolations, que ceux-ci pousseront à un rare degré de perfection. C'est même un des caractères déconcertants d'un ouvrage comme la Vie de Moïse, que des considérations de psychologie spirituelle élémentaire s'y mêlent constamment aux plus hautes spéculations.³

Gregory's achievement in accommodating elements of these diverse traditions within a single coherent theology was largely instrumental in establishing the doctrinal principles on which - with the intermediary influence of Ps.-Dionysius - one of the dominant schools of mystical theology in western Christianity was founded.

It is impracticable, in the context of the present thesis, to give an ample account of Gregory's mystical theory and its relationship to its theological and philosophical background. The subject has, in any case, been responsibly treated by various scholars in this field: the work of Gersh and Daniélou has already been alluded to, and references to further detailed studies of areas which can only be touched on in the body of the thesis will be included in the footnotes to this and the following chapter. The theological basis of Gregory's treatises is, however, closely allied to their particular use of language and must be outlined as a preface to the analysis of their linguistic characteristics. Both rest upon the premise of God's imperviousness to human powers of cognition:

Listen to the counsel of Ecclesiastes: 'Do not utter a word before God. For God', he says, 'is in heaven, and thou upon earth' (Eccles. 5.1). And he shows, I think, especially by the distance that separates heaven and earth, despite their mutual affinity, how far the divine nature surpasses the

compass of man's thought. For as much as the stars are beyond the grasp of the fingers, so much and many times more does that nature which is above all human minds transcend our earthly thoughts.⁴

The fact of man's creation in the divine image, Gregory affirms, nevertheless constitutes a relationship between God and man which implies the possibility of some form of creaturely knowledge of God's nature:

The Lord does not say that it is blessed to know something about God, but rather to possess God in oneself: 'Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God' (Matth. 5.8). By this I do not think He means that the man who purifies the eye of his soul will enjoy an immediate vision of God (ἀντιπρόσωπον τι θέαμα τὸν θεὸν προτιθέναι); rather I think this marvellous saying teaches us the same lesson that the Word expressed more clearly to others when He said: 'The kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17.21). And this teaches us that the man who purifies his heart of every passionate impulse will see the image of the divine nature in his own beauty. So too in this short sentence the Word, I think, is giving us the following advice: All you mortals who have within yourselves a desire to behold (θεωρίας) the supreme Good, when you are told that the majesty of God is exalted above the heavens, that the divine glory is inexpressible, its beauty indescribable, its nature inaccessible, do not despair at never being able to behold what you desire. For you do have within your grasp the degree of knowledge (κατανοήσεως μέτρον) of God which you can attain. For, when God made you, He at once endowed your nature with this perfection: upon the structure of your nature He imprinted an imitation of the perfections of His own nature, just as one would impress upon wax the outline of an emblem. But the wickedness that has been poured all over this divine engraving has made your perfection useless and hidden it with a vicious coating. You must then wash away, by a life of virtue, the dirt that has come to cling to your heart like plaster, and then your divine beauty will once again shine forth.⁵

The theory involves a redefinition of knowledge in the context of man's apprehension of God: at the highest level it is non-intellectual, but rather comprises a loving intuition of God's presence in the soul, a properly mystical awareness which is at the same time a conviction of God's unknowability, not merely relative to man's limited understanding,

but as an essential quality of His being. Gregory emphasises this point in his exposition of the account of the Bride's search for her Beloved in the Canticle:

Hence she gets up again and in spirit traverses the entire spiritual and transcendental world, which she here calls a 'city' In her search she surveys the entire angelic army. And not finding among the good things there the object of her quest, she reasons thus with herself: Is it possible that my Beloved can be comprehended (ληπτόν)? 'Have you seen him whom my soul loveth?' Their only answer to the question is silence; and by their silence they show that what she seeks is incomprehensible (ἀληπτον) to them. After she has gone about the entire supermundane city by the operation of her mind (τῆ πολυπραγμοσύνη τῆς διανοίας) and has not recognized her Beloved even among things spiritual and immaterial, then at last she gives up all she has found; for she realizes that what she seeks can be understood only in the very inability to comprehend His essence, and that every intelligible attribute becomes a mere hindrance to those who seek to find him (ἐν μόνῳ τῷ μὴ καταλαμβάνεσθαι τί ἐστίν, ὅτι ἐστὶ γινωσκόμενον, οὐ πᾶν γνώρισμα καταληπτικόν, ἐμπόδιον τοῖς ἀναζητοῦσι πρὸς τὴν εὕρεσιν γίνεται).⁶

This mystical awareness, which is the culmination of the soul's yearning for immediate apprehension of God, thus transcends the scope of the intellect, though Gregory suggests that it can only succeed on an approach to God which engages man's intellectual and sensual faculties to their utmost capacity and exhausts created phenomena: the fountain in the garden of the Canticle 4.12, he insists in the ninth sermon of his commentary on the text, denotes man's intellect which, if it is rightly directed, promotes the soul's first impulse for union with God, just as the garden is nourished by the channelling of the water from the fountain.⁷ The different stages of the ascent are traced in Sermon XI:

Our initial withdrawal from wrong and erroneous ideas of God is a transition from darkness to light. Next comes a closer awareness of hidden things, and by this the soul is guided through sense phenomena to the world of the invisible. And this awareness is a kind of cloud, which overshadows all appearances, and slowly guides and accustoms the soul to look

towards what is hidden. Next the soul makes progress through all these stages and goes on higher, and as she leaves below all that human nature can attain, she enters within the secret chamber of the divine knowledge, and here she is cut off on all sides by the divine darkness. Now she leaves outside all that can be grasped by sense or reason, and the only thing left for her contemplation is the invisible and the incomprehensible. And here God is, as the Scriptures tell us in connection with Moses: 'But Moses went to the dark cloud wherein God was' (Exod. 20.21).⁸

The distinctions between the modes of knowledge which are proper to the various phases of the mystic way are not formally articulated by Gregory, however, but his is the pattern for Ps.-Dionysius' systematic differentiation of mystical theology from symbolic or analogical theology, and, hence, of the negative from the affirmative way of contemplation.

Gregory's concept of the contemplative way is dominated by the belief in man's creation in the divine image.⁹ Union with God is realized by the progressive stripping away of elements which obscure the image, and necessitates purification of the intellect as well as the spirit. On one level, it is a process of recollection, in which the soul withdraws into its inmost being and rediscovers there its own divinity.¹⁰ The affinities with the platonist theory of introversion in this respect are evident, and Gregory's comparison of the procedure with the art of the sculptor in On the Making of Man (chs. 29-30),¹¹ is very reminiscent of Plotinus' use of the same simile, for example, in the Enneads I, 6.9.¹² Gregory, however, reasserts the unique significance of the Christian claim: he insists that man's possession of the divine image (εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ) distinguishes him from the rest of creation, that it is implanted in him by divine grace and that it is only to be recovered by the intervention of this grace.¹³ Man's own efforts, unaided by divine grace, are inadequate to the

attainment of the soul's perfection. The platonist teaching concerning man's potential for the achievement of perfection, by contrast, is grounded in the belief that the human soul - in platonist terms, his intellectual being or λογος, that is - is connatural to the Good from which it ultimately derives its existence and is, therefore, itself innately good. No distinction in kind is made between them, and thus the process of achieving perfection consists in the discovery of the divine within the self and is, first and foremost, a continuous act of the intellect determined by the individual will. It is generally admitted that the tendency of neoplatonist philosophy - particularly as it was developed by Plotinus - was more mystical: it seems to concede a role for love in the ascent to perfection and envisages ultimate knowledge of the One as being accessible to the soul only in an ecstasy of union.¹⁴ It remains, however, a speculative mysticism, whereas Gregory defines the realization of the divine image as a progressive transformation into Christ whose medium is love:

In the same way the bride, in saying, 'I to my beloved, and my beloved to me', declares that she has modelled herself on Christ, thus recovering her proper loveliness, that blessed state which our human nature had in the beginning, for now her beauty has developed 'in the image and likeness' of that sole true Beauty which is the prototype.¹⁵

The transformation, moreover, is never complete: Gregory repudiates platonist theory on the common nature of the divine and the human, and this involves a redefinition of perfection as a perpetual striving for likeness to Christ. Gregory's term for the process is epectasis (ἐπεκτασις); he gives an account of it in the fifth sermon of the Commentary on the Canticle:

But in our changeable natures, however, good and evil exist by turns, because of the power we have to choose equally either side of a contradiction. The consequent evil becomes the limit

of our good ... But the divine nature is simple, pure, unique, immutable, unalterable, ever abiding in the same way, and never goes outside of itself ... When therefore it draws human nature to participate in its perfection, because of the divine transcendence it must always be superior to our nature in the same degree. The soul grows by its constant participation in that which transcends it; and yet the perfection in which the soul shares remains ever the same, and is always discovered by the soul to be transcendent to the same degree.¹⁶

The neoplatonist notion of contemplative ecstasy, however, is also integral to Gregory's concept of the soul's way to union with God. On the one hand, the soul withdraws into itself to restore the purity of its divine image: yet once it has advanced in the way of perfection, the intensity of its love for God also impels it to reach beyond itself to attain the union it desires. This is the tenor of Gregory's interpretation of Abraham's migration (Genesis 12. 1-4),¹⁷ and his close and lengthy exposition of the symbolism of Moses' experience on Sinai and the Bride's search for her Beloved in the Canticle. Gregory insists, therefore, on the paradoxical character of the unitive way - both in this respect and insofar as the soul's abandonment of self is at once an initiation into a higher state of perfection. The point is illustrated and commented on by Daniélou:

Le double caractère d'être un au-delà de l'âme, auquel on parvient cependant en rentrant au plus intérieur de l'âme (par opposition à l'extériorité du monde sensible), qui constitue un des paradoxes de la vie mystique, comme la nuée lumineuse, s'exprime par le rapprochement de l'entrée et de la sortie: c'est l'extase - intase: 'O bienheureuse sortie que celle où l'âme sort à la suite du Verbe. Le Seigneur gardera ton entrée et ta sortie, dit le Prophète. C'est là vraiment l'entrée (ἡ εἰσοδος) et la sortie (ἡ ἔξοδος) réservées par Dieu à ceux qui en sont dignes. Et en effet la sortie de ce dans quoi nous sommes est entrée dans les biens qui sont au delà ... Ainsi Paul ne cessait de se tendre (ἐπεκτεινόμενος)¹⁸ vers ce qui était en avant et de sortir de l'état où il se trouvait pour pénétrer (εἰσδύμενος) plus à l'intérieur (εἰς τὸ ἐνδοτερον) dans celui où il n'était pas encore.' (XLIV, 1024D; 1036A).¹⁹

Gregory's theory of ecstasy nevertheless differs significantly from its counterpart in neoplatonist thought: it involves transcendence not only of the phenomenal world, but also of the self.²⁰ The condition of the soul in ecstasy is described in the treatise On Virginity:

Lifted out of himself (οἶον ἔκβὰς ἑαυτοῦ) by the Spirit, he glimpsed in that blessed ecstasy God's infinite and incomprehensible beauty.²¹

Thus, whereas ecstasy in neoplatonist terms connotes the final perfection of the intellectual being which admits the soul to knowledge of the One,²² it consists, for Gregory, in the surmounting of man's intellectual faculties of cognition and entails an awareness of God's being which is essentially non-rational. The linguistic implications of Gregory's concept of ecstasy are hinted at by Daniélou: its expression, that is, constitutes a challenge to the relationship between language and rationality which sanctions the use of paradox as an appropriate verbal mode.

II. Development of a mystical vocabulary

It has already been suggested that Gregory's importance in the history of Christian theology consists primarily in his evolution of a coherent mystical doctrine which assimilated a complex background of judaic and platonist thought. His attitude to non-Christian culture is both receptive and discriminating: just as Moses was nurtured as a child by Pharaoh's daughter, herself unable to bear children, so, Gregory explains in his exposition of Exodus 2, other ideologies contribute much to the pursuit of the mystic way, though their learning is ultimately sterile without the infusion of Christian faith.²³ He exercises the same principles of eclecticism in assembling a vocabulary

which corresponds to the particular demands of mystical theology as he developed it. He is, indeed, acutely aware of the correlation between language and theology, and he was largely instrumental in instituting the technical terminology of negative mysticism which was formalized with the Dionysian mystical tradition.

Gregory's treatises stand as a practical attempt to come to terms with the inherent difficulties of reconciling language with the special conditions of Christian theology. They include, however, much theoretical analysis of the problem. His account of it rests on the premise that a distinction exists between the nature of God and that of man. The implications of this are twofold. On the one hand, he emphasizes the intrinsic limitations of man's rational faculties, which preclude any possibility of his attaining discursive knowledge of the divine essence:

.... no created being can go out of itself by rational contemplation (καταληπτικῆς θεωρίας). Whatever it sees, it must see itself; and even if it thinks it is seeing beyond itself, it does not in fact possess a nature which can achieve this. And thus in its contemplation of Being it tries to force itself to transcend a spatial representation (οἷον τὴν διαστηματικὴν ἔννοιαν ἐν τῇ τῶν ὄντων θεωρίᾳ παρελθεῖν βιάζεται), but it never achieves it. For in every possible thought, the mind is surely aware of the spatial element which it perceives in addition to the thought content; and the spatial element is, of course, created. Yet the Good that we have learned to seek and to cherish is beyond all creation, and hence beyond all comprehension. Thus how can our mind, which always operates on a dimensional image, comprehend a nature that has no dimension, especially as our minds are constantly penetrating, by analysis, into things which are more and more profound. And though the mind in its restlessness ranges through all that is knowable, it has never yet discovered a way of comprehending eternity in such wise that it might place itself outside of it, and go beyond the idea of eternity itself and that Being which is above all being.²⁴

In spite of man's innate desire for more perfect knowledge of God,

Gregory insists that his perceptual powers are constrained by their own created nature and cannot encompass uncreated reality. Furthermore, he stresses that even if this were not the case, the absolute transcendence of the Godhead would of itself inevitably check any human aspiration to complete comprehension of its nature. Man exists, he suggests, as it were at the edge of a precipice, poised on the firm ground which represents the accessible created world and confronted with the immeasurable gulf of God's unknowability.²⁵

The importance of these complementary doctrinal assertions in linguistic terms is highlighted in the succinct statement of the problem which occurs in his exposition of Matthew 5.8;

Men have never discovered a faculty to comprehend the incomprehensible (τὴν τῶν ἐκλήπτων κατανόησιν); nor have we ever been able to devise an intellectual technique for grasping the inconceivable (καταληπτικὴ τῶν ἀμηχάνων).²⁶

In denying the adequacy of reason as a means of apprehending God, Gregory pointedly demonstrates the allied impossibility of conveying religious experience of this level in human language. Just as the process of intellectual speculation is arrested before it can achieve its goal, so here the expected sequence of language is thwarted and the vocabulary forced to recoil upon itself - man cannot comprehend (καταληπτικὴ) the incomprehensible (ἐκλήπτων). The positive impulse, in actuality and linguistically alike, necessarily tends towards negation. Discursive thought and, therefore, language, so long as it maintains its normal direct relationship with intellectual or sensual perception, are hence both manifestly inappropriate in the context of apprehension of the ultimate Godhead. Indeed, Gregory emphasizes that the insistence on verbal formulation of something which is, by its

very nature, inexpressible is an implicit contradiction of the fundamental tenets of this theology:

And he who obstinately tries to express it in words (ὕπο τὴν τοῦ λόγου σημασίαν καθέλκειν), unconsciously offends God. For He who is believed to transcend the universe must surely transcend speech (λόγον). He who tries to circumscribe the infinite in speech (λόγῳ διαλαμβάνειν ἐπιχειρῶν το ἀόριστον) no longer admits that He is transcendent by the very fact that he equates God with his speech, under the impression that the proper description of God is only such as his discourse is capable of expressing. He is unaware that the proper notion of the supreme Being is preserved precisely in our belief that God transcends knowledge (ὕπερ γνῶσιν εἶναι).²⁷

The relationship between God and language is, therefore, unique and ambiguous. Ultimately, words are shown to have no direct bearing on the divine essence. It is, however, interesting to note that the prose in which Gregory defines the linguistic problem is conspicuously lucid and confident - both qualities which are by no means incongruous with the predominantly theoretical character of the passages, though they do seem to be at variance with the repudiation of language in respect of certain areas of belief which Gregory consistently maintains. And indeed, the nature of his writing will be seen to be significantly different and often powerfully evocative in more experiential contexts which seek to resolve rather than simply identify the apparently insurmountable difficulties involved. It might be inferred, then, that Gregory envisages diverse usages of language as reflecting the various functions which words must perform within the broad spectrum of experience which may generally be termed 'religious', and the necessity for pressing patently heterogeneous claims concerning Gregory's linguistic practice must, in consequence, as will become increasingly evident, be seen to stem from the paradox which is central to the religious situation. Thus, while there is clearly a sense in which Gregory acknow-

ledges all language to be in the last resort futile as a means of expressing God, it must be said that his extensive corpus in itself represents a tacit recognition of the necessity of communicating spiritual truth; moreover, the existence of biblical authority, together with the implications of his theology as to the potential applicability of language in certain contexts will all sanction a use of language which is limited and closely adapted to answer the peculiar demands of the religious situation.

In essence, it is Gregory's insistence on the absolute disjunction between earthly and spiritual reality and the different human modes of experiencing them which governs his notions of linguistic propriety:

Divine providence has divided creatures into two classes: the one is material and bound to the senses; the other is immaterial and spiritual. By the sensuous I mean anything that we can perceive by our sense faculties; and the spiritual is that which transcends the sensuous. Now the spiritual is without bound or limit, whereas the other is completely circumscribed by limitations. For everything material is determined by quantity and quality, and in our concept of its properties there is always limitation in its magnitude, form, appearance and shape; no one who considers matter can grasp anything in his imagination beyond these dimensions.

What is spiritual and immaterial, however, is free of all such determinations, it evades all terms and has no limits.²⁸

Similarly, Gregory affirms elsewhere that the only definition of virtue is its boundlessness,²⁹ and the only comprehension of God the acknowledgement of His complete independence of finite concepts.³⁰ Indeed, not only are attempts at conceptual formulation manifestly inappropriate in relation to spiritual truth, but the principles of phenomenal reality to which they rightly correspond are actually contradicted in the spiritual sphere. Hence he says of man's progress in perfection:

C'est là la plus paradoxale (παραδοξότατον) de toutes les

choses, que stabilité et mobilité soient la même chose. Car d'ordinaire celui qui avance n'est pas arrêté et celui qui est arrêté n'avance pas. Ici il avance du fait même qu'il est arrêté. Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire? Que plus quelqu'un demeure fixé et inébranable dans le bien, plus il avance dans la voie de la vertu.³¹

The coincidence of usually opposing ideas which obtains in this spiritual condition can therefore only be embodied linguistically in paradox. Gregory's practice here is undoubtedly consistent with his recognition of the proper function of language as articulating the perceptions of the senses or intellect, which he outlines formally in his treatise On Virginity:

Here our senses are quite adequate in admiring and absorbing this beauty, and in communicating it to others by expressing it in language, using the descriptive power of words as a kind of picture. And yet the archetype of this beauty escapes our comprehension. For how can words possibly find any mode of description which could make it visible? One may not appeal to color or shape or size, or the proportions of form, or any other trivial detail of that sort. Since this beauty is without form or shape, and is alien to any material quality or to anything that we observe in connection with bodies by sense perception, how could anyone come to know it by any of those qualities which can be perceived by the senses.³²

In resorting to paradox, Gregory is thus implicitly rejecting the possibility of offering an accurate description of this spiritual state which can be verified by reference to ordinary experience; instead he aims at an approximate representation in language of the inherent abnormality of the situation, which effectively locates it outside the limits of normal modes of apprehension and expression. The language in some sense reflects rather than describes the situation. It seems, therefore, that a reappraisal of the accepted relationship between language and its object is, in fact, taking place within the specific context of verbal formulation of spiritual truths.

The recognition that the shift occurs in the function of language rather than in its nature is a crucial one. To change the form of words themselves would be to create an esoteric system of communication, incomprehensible except to those initiated into its secrets. Such a development would, of course, be diametrically opposed to the evangelical ideals of Christianity; yet it is undeniable that Gregory relies to a large extent on his readers' sympathetic assent to the doctrinal principles which govern his language and places much of the onus for proper understanding of his work on them. The process of moral and intellectual purification which prepares the soul for mystical union also ensures that the reader will interpret his words in the pure spirit in which they are intended. Hence Gregory writes at the outset of the first sermon of his Commentary on the Canticle:

All of you, then, who have been transformed into something divine and sinless - it is to you that I speak of the mystery of the Canticle of Canticles. Come within His incorruptible bridal chamber, now that you have put on the white garment of pure and chaste thoughts. Some there may be who do not wear the garment of a clean conscience as befits the divine espousals; they may be involved in their own thoughts, and try to drag down the pure words of the Bride and Bridegroom to the level of irrational animal pleasure, and thus become absorbed in shameful images. Such as these must be cast out of the community who joyfully participate in the marriage, and be assigned to the 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' instead of the happiness of the marriage chamber.³³

The basis for proper understanding is emphatically spiritual, as is the uncompromising penalty for misinterpretation. The words themselves, it must be noted, remain unchanged, but their significance has been re-defined by the context in which they now occur. They are, in effect, stripped of their normal seductive sensuality, though, paradoxically, they depend upon retaining some vestige of it for their evocative power. Their meaning has largely become conditional upon apparently extraneous factors - namely, the state of grace of the reader and,

equally importantly, the writer. It seems certain, indeed, that Gregory advocates this positive re-use of language on the authority of biblical example. He commends the power of biblical language:

For what could be more paradoxical than that nature itself should purify its own passions? For in words that seem to suggest passion it offers us precepts and instruction in purity. For he (i.e. Solomon) does not say that we ought to be beyond all carnal passion, that we should mortify our members on earth, or that our lips should not be sullied by sinful words; rather he so manages our souls that we are made to look to chastity by means of words which seem to suggest the opposite, and through sensuous expressions he reveals a meaning which is incorruptible.³⁴

Thus through the exploitation of this form of semantic paradox, as with the instances of different kinds of verbal paradox alluded to above, Gregory is in some sense able to formulate positive assertions of religious truths from the ordinarily inadequate fabric of language. Similarly, in theological terms, he asserts that man's essential mutability must become the principle of his perpetual progress in perfection.³⁵ The consistently close relationship between doctrine and language in Gregory's works is reaffirmed here; in respect of both, the potentially debasing elements become creatively invested with the force of affirmation.

The implications of this situation for the writer of works of theology are analysed more closely in On Virginity:

Once a man has purified his heart, so that he may perchance see the Lord's beatitude fulfilled, he will then despise all human utterance as absolutely incapable of expressing what he has experienced. Again, if a man is immersed in carnal passions, so that these inclinations, like a rheum, put a glaze over the window of the soul, anything you might say, no matter how strong, would be wasted on him. When speaking of miracles it does not matter whether you understate or exaggerate to those who have no sensibility whatever.

It is the same thing with the sunshine. If a man has not seen it from his earliest days, any effort to translate the experience into words is useless and meaningless. You cannot make the brilliance of the sunlight shine through his ears.³⁶

The passage is characteristic of Gregory's style in its vitality and naturalistic re-use of entirely traditional imagery. Nevertheless, it insists that since the relationship between God and language is at best oblique and so heavily dependent on sympathetic interpretation by the reader, there is actually a certain arbitrariness about the choice of words to embody truths which are, by their very nature, ultimately inexpressible. The principal effect on language is thus liberating. It is largely because of this that Gregory is able to communicate the same unchanging reality by means of diverse terminologies which are, in consequence, at once intrinsically irrelevant and supremely meaningful and authoritative.

This is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of Gregory's achievement in respect of his influence on the later tradition of negative mysticism. It permitted him to absorb into his fundamentally biblical vocabulary and pattern of thought - for the most part without incongruity - an apparently alien phraseology mainly derived from Platonism, which was decisive in shaping the vocabulary which characterizes Christian mysticism as well as its doctrine.³⁷ Daniélou raises two important points in this connexion: he notes,

.... la liberté avec laquelle Grégoire use du vocabulaire platonicien. Jamais chez lui de citations littérales. Mais les expressions platoniciens sont groupés librement. C'est ce qui nous montre pleinement à la fois combien il était impregné de l'imagerie platonicienne et en même temps combien il en est peu esclave. C'est un vocabulaire chiffré, un système de symboles, analogue à celui que lui fournit l'Écriture, et qui ne vaut pas par lui-même, mais par les significations dont il le charge. Il n'y a pas chez lui de littéralisme mosaïque, mais ce sont deux systèmes de symboles qui lui servent à exprimer la réalité, les véritables ὄντα, c'est-à-dire le Christ et ses mystères.³⁸

Daniélou's comments support the inference that Gregory was guided by

utilitarian rather than purely aesthetic considerations in his manipulation of the resources of language. He emphasizes, too, the technical and symbolic status of the various ranges of vocabulary in which Gregory couches his mystical theology, and which, indeed, determined the role of language with regard to mystical theory and experience which became integral to the Dionysian mystical tradition.

Figural language

The synthesis of elements of thought and language from various sources which Gregory achieved in his theology may be illustrated in respect of one of the most influential areas of his work - that is, the allegorical interpretation of the life of Moses as a pattern for the mystic ascent. Both in its general allegorical method and in its exposition of many significant narrative details, the Life of Moses in the first instance is largely dependent on Philo.³⁹ Hans Lewy summarizes the nature and importance of Philo's approach to scriptural exegesis in the introduction to his compilation of translated extracts from Philo's work:

The events related are to be understood as signs of spiritual happenings independent of time and space; their scene is man's soul and their content his everlasting struggle for salvation. Thus allegory becomes the instrument for the expression of a strictly personal form of religious experience.⁴⁰

However, it was largely through the mediation of Origen, who, writing in the third century, palliated some of the unacceptable extremes of Philo's thinking, that his method was rendered capable of being absorbed into the orthodox Christian tradition to which Gregory belongs. Daniélou thus remarks concerning the formative effect of Philo's notions that,

In Origen and Gregory of Nyssa the influence of Philo will give an 'interiority', a reflective depth, which normal typology

was inclined to overlook We see here the mutual impact of two planes of action; the evolution of history and the individual soul 41

Particular illustrations of Gregory's indebtedness to Philo and Origen for crucial points of doctrine and expression will be included in the course of this chapter.

It must, however, be clear that the mystical interpretation of the life of Moses in Gregory's works is inseparable from his notion of the soul's perpetual progress in perfection - a concept which is, in fact, Stoic in origin, though it is completely redefined by Gregory, for whom the condition is eternal and not the prelude to a final state of absolute perfection. Yet superimposed on this, is the analogous idea, which is quintessentially Platonic, that the process of becoming perfect is one of continuous ascent. Elements from entirely disparate traditions thus coalesce into a unified and dynamic theology, and the exposition of the life of Moses and, equally importantly, the Canticle of Canticles, according to Philonian allegorical principles, as having reference to the mystic way, is reinforced by the basically Platonic assumption that the biblical texts are governed by a scheme of ascent.

The idea is interestingly explored by Anders Nygren in his book Agape and Eros,⁴² where he attempts to trace the evolution of these conflicting concepts from their separate origins, through the period of their uneasy yoking together in religious thought up to the time of the reformation. Nygren marks Gregory as one of the earliest theologians to effect a plausible synthesis between the two notions. He places particular emphasis on the inherently aspiring quality of 'eros', which, in contrast to the fundamentally Christian concept of 'agape', is Platonic in origin, and he demonstrates convincingly the centrality

of this idea in Gregorian spirituality - particularly in the area of his mystical theology. He substantiates his argument by reference to the frequency with which Platonic images of ascent occur in Gregory's works: e.g., the ladder, the arrow, the flame, wings and the chain of love.

It should also be noted in this context, though the point will subsequently be discussed in greater detail, that Gregory inherited from Platonism a terminology which was not only dominated by the general principle of ascent, but one which was already to some extent categorized according to the traditional association of its expressions with different stages of the progress towards perfection.⁴³ In this respect, Gregory's Platonist phraseology predictably found a close parallel in the vocabulary which he assembled on the basis of Scripture, and it is therefore essential that careful consideration should first be given to his approach to the Bible and its impact on his writings.

Gregory's attitude to biblical language is above all profoundly reverential. For him, the Bible is "the inspired word" (δ Θεόπνευστος λόγος)⁴⁴ of divine revelation, and the intrinsic integrity and evocative power of its language is preserved even when it is assimilated into his own written works, justifying and, indeed, sanctifying the attempt to express something of the ineffable nature of God in words. There is, moreover, a fundamental conviction that the words of the Bible are intended to be interpreted in a spiritual sense. In his Commentary on the Canticle, for example, Gregory emphasizes that the soul seeking perfection must persevere in extricating the inner meaning of scriptural texts:

We do, of course, say that it is sufficient if we are filled with the obvious sense of Scripture, if (just as Moses commanded for the celebration of the Passover) we eat the flesh that appears and leave untouched the bones of obscurity (Exod. 12. 8-10).⁴⁵ But if anyone desires the hidden marrow of the Word, he must seek it of Him Who reveals His mysteries to those who are worthy.⁴⁶

Similarly, earlier in the same treatise Gregory alludes to the "symbolic wall of doctrine" (τοῦ τυπικοῦ τῆς διδασκαλίας τοίχου),⁴⁷ and goes on to assert that interpretation of the Bible for the benefit of fellow Christians is among the primary duties of those who have achieved the end of contemplation, typified by the figure of Moses the Law-Giver.⁴⁸

There is thus a sense in which Gregory regards the text of the Bible as obviously symbolic and therefore needing to be perpetually translated to "an allegorical level suitable for the divinity".⁴⁹ In his discussion of the account of Abraham's migration, for example, he argues in support of a symbolic interpretation of the passage, since the narrative can have no deep spiritual significance if it is understood in historical terms alone:

But let us, if we may, interpret the meaning of the sacred history (Gen. 12.1-4) according to the profound insight of the Apostle (Hebr. 11. 8-10) by transposing the story to an allegorical level, even though we allow the validity of the literal meaning. Abraham at the divine command went forth from his own country and from his own kin, but his migration was such as befitted a prophet in quest of the knowledge of God. Indeed, there is no physical migration, I think, that can prepare us for the knowledge of those things which are discovered by the spirit. But by going out of his native land, that is, out of himself, out of the realm of base and earthly thoughts, Abraham raised his mind as far as possible above the common limits of our human nature and abandoned the association which the soul has with the senses.⁵⁰

In the same way, the detailed description of Moses' priestly vestments (Exod. 28) and the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod. 25-27) seem

to Gregory to be fully explicable only in terms of a symbolic meaning.⁵¹ Indeed, he feels compelled at least to suggest an interpretation of the text, even when, as with the reference to cinammon in the Canticle 4.14, the only apparent explanation seems by his own admission to outstrip the bounds of probability.⁵²

At the beginning of the Commentary on the Canticle, Gregory in fact sets down several important precepts concerned with the proper interpretation of Scripture, with specific reference to the nuptial imagery which is central to the text in question:

In the art of painting the material of the different colors fills out the representation of the model. But anyone who looks at the picture that has been completed through the skilful use of color does not stop with the mere contemplation of the colors that have been painted on the tablet; rather he looks at the form which the artist has created in color. So it is with the Scripture we are discussing. We must not as it were look merely at the material of the colors (in this case, the words), but rather at the form of the King that the chaste concepts of the mind have expressed in words. Now the colors, as for example, white, yellow, black, red, blue, are in this case the words in their obvious meanings, as for example, mouth, kiss, myrrh, wine, parts of the body, bed, maidens, and the like. And the form that is expressed by these words is that state of integrity and blessedness, union with God, the banishment of all evil, and the assimilation of the truly good and beautiful.⁵³

The emphasis here is on comprehending the text as an entity reflecting a single coherent spiritual meaning. The meaning of individual details must therefore be subject to the overall significance of the passage.⁵⁴ The decisive factor is the underlying sameness of the religious truth, which not only renders all terminologies in a sense arbitrary, as has been argued above,⁵⁵ but also fosters a remarkable fluidity of language, so that diverse images may with equal propriety convey the same essential meaning. Thus, by associating the inner significance of the apparently unrelated verses of Canticle 3.8, Romans 9.6 and Luke 11.7, Gregory is

able to assert that the warrior, the true Israelite and the child referred to in the various texts are alike symbolic representations of God's elect.⁵⁶ More importantly, the bridal imagery of the Canticle thus effectively becomes synonymous with the mystical terminology centring on the account of the life of Moses. The texts are seen to be mutually corroborative by virtue of their inner significance. Hence Gregory verifies his interpretation of the Canticle by referring to the symbolism of Exodus:

.... having come, as she thinks, to the height of her hopes, and thinking that she is already united with her Beloved, she speaks of her more perfect participation in good as a 'bed', referring to the 'night' (νύκτα), the time of darkness (σκότους). By the 'night', she refers to the contemplation of the invisible (τῶν ἀοράτων τὴν θεωρίαν), just as Moses, who entered into the darkness to the place where God was; and God, as the Prophet says, 'made the darkness his covert round about him' (Ps. 17. 12).⁵⁷

The commutability of mystical expressions which follows from this is one of the most extraordinary characteristics of Gregory's language, as well as one of the most influential. Indeed, the assumed identity of meaning in these biblical texts served to consolidate them both in subsequent Christian tradition as primary sources for both the dogma and the vocabulary of mysticism.

Implicit in this discussion of Gregory's attitude to biblical language, however, is the recognition that there is a vital relationship between the actual and symbolic connotations of the text. In connexion with his interpretation of Canticle 4.12, for example, Gregory expounds the mystical significance of the fig by precise reference to the natural properties of the fruit.⁵⁸ Similarly with the allusion to God's 'back' in Exodus 33.23, Gregory argues insistently for a symbolic interpretation of the passage - but on the sure

basis of its literal meaning.⁵⁹ His method in this instance is, in fact, interesting and entirely representative. He works from a rational account of the superficial sense of the text to the conclusion that to attribute physical characteristics of this kind to the transcendent God in real terms would be patently ridiculous; hence the vocabulary must necessarily be understood symbolically. Significantly, however, the tenor of the words in a non-figurative context must be strictly adhered to on the symbolic level. The mention of God's back will therefore denote the need to follow Him in spirit, since in physical terms, the leader's back would be visible only to those who follow. The reader, like the writer, has to make an imaginative shift to a specifically religious perspective, but, having done so, the language will be seen to maintain a consistent logic of its own.

It will be apparent from this outline of Gregory's concept of the relationship between the literal and symbolic meanings of Scripture that his attitude is in close agreement with the principles which govern the figural approach to biblical narrative and human experience. Indeed, as might be supposed, the impact of this enormously influential interpretative method on Gregory's theology was decisive - as well in its strictest form as in its most general.

The most penetrating studies of the bearing of theories of pre-figuration on the history of Christian thought have been produced by Jean Daniélou, in From Shadows to Reality, and by Erich Auerbach in his seminal essay 'Figura'.⁶⁰ The treatment of the topic and the principal areas of interest are in each case different, but both writers concur in respect of the essential characteristics of figural interpretation. Thus Auerbach asserts,

Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfils the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present or future, and not with concepts or abstractions Since in figural representation one thing stands for another, since one thing represents and signifies the other, figural interpretation is 'allegorical' in the widest sense. But it differs from most of the allegorical forms known to us by the historicity both of the sign and what it signifies.⁶¹

Auerbach is thus emphatic in his insistence on the actuality of the events which are the substance of figural interpretation; it is only the impulse to interpret them by associating their significance which is in any way dependent upon spiritual vision.⁶² Clearly, therefore, it should be stressed that Gregory's exposition of the life of Moses, for example, as the pattern for mystical ascent does not at all detract from the historical validity of the biblical narrative. It rather conforms with the notion of prophetic prefiguration in its narrowest sense, whereby episodes in the Old Testament are seen to foreshadow particular events in the New, which themselves look forward to their impact on the individual human soul in time and in eternity.⁶³ The truth which underlies them is unchanging and foreknown by the divine intelligence. Thus the significance of the Moses story is effectively enriched by being subjected to figural interpretation because it is located temporally within the eternal divine plan of salvation as the prefiguration, in the first instance, of Christ's historical act of redemption in his crucifixion, and also, prophetically, of the perpetual process of salvation which takes place within each Christian soul. The exposition of Moses' story, which it has already been claimed that Gregory derived from Philo, may therefore now be defined as fully typological rather than in a general sense allegorical.⁶⁴

The linguistic implications of this point may hardly be overstated. In the Life of Moses, Gregory affirms, "Le sens littéral correspond bien aux réalités",⁶⁵ and it is this conviction that a radical interrelation exists between the actual and figurative meanings of the text which invests the biblical language with a unique appropriateness and power as a means of communicating mystical theology. Similarly the nuptial imagery of the Canticle is seen to possess a force which is in some way more than symbolic; it is intimately connected with the real personal experience of the contemplative soul. It is perhaps as a result of this that the mystical vocabulary which evolved from these scriptural texts is characterized by a vitality and immediacy which is yet substantiated by the solid authority of patristic tradition. Indeed, this may possibly account in some measure for the continued prevalence of this terminology among major spiritual writers as late as the Middle Ages.

It may, however, be argued that the Canticle is not in the strictest sense of the word 'typological', since it has no specific counterpart in the historical events of the New Testament but only symbolizes the experience of the individual soul. Certainly the practice of interpreting according to figural principles seems to have encroached early on spheres in which it was theoretically inappropriate. Daniélou attributes this largely to the influence of Philo, whose universal allegorizing was often at the expense of the literal meaning of the text:

Then we meet Philo's influence in the manner of approach which consists in seeking a spiritual sense in the whole Scriptures. This is an extension of typology to the realms where there is no proper foundation for it, as for example the development of the measurements of the ark.⁶⁶

Gregory, in fact, follows Philo's example in the specific instance alluded to by Daniélou,⁶⁷ and it is clear that Philo's method permeated Gregory's entire reading of the Bible.

Sacramental vocabulary

However, there are other areas, still properly amenable to typological exposition, in which this mode of interpretation served to give currency to a more pervasive though perhaps less schematic use of biblical imagery than, for example, in the case of the coherent symbolism derived from the sequence of events recorded in Exodus. Of these, the most important in the present context furnished the early church Fathers with a superstructure of imagery which centred on the sacraments and spanned the whole of the Bible. Daniélou stresses the frequency with which passages occur in Scripture which are susceptible of being interpreted in a sacramental sense:

Typology seeks in the Old Testament not only the type of the realities of the New Testament but also the type of the 'sacramenta' beneath which this reality is expressed and which are themselves sacraments of the realities of the Old Law: for if God has chosen certain signs rather than others, as St. Hilary remarks (Tract. Myst. 1,33), it is because they constitute a system of 'correspondences' in the course of history, between the different covenants, thus bringing out that they form parts of a whole. The group of water and wood which typify Baptism in the Old Testament form one of the oldest of these 'sacramenta'. We meet it in the Flood, in the wood which sweetened the waters of Marah, in the axe of Elisha floating on the waters. It forms part of the mystagogical catechesis of Baptism in the early Church.⁶⁸

The significance of this in theological terms is evident; but its implications for language are also extremely far-reaching. In the first part of this chapter, the need for continual self-purification in the soul aspiring to contemplative union was much emphasized. It may, however, be further demonstrated that Gregory characteristically envis-

ages this process as a perpetual re-enactment of the spiritual regeneration which takes place at baptism and is symbolized in its initiatory rites. Thus the account of the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14, for example, is in his eyes simultaneously and unquestionably representative of the actual and figurative cleansing which is first achieved through baptism and is subsequently confirmed in the successive purifications which are essential to the mystic way:

Par là l'histoire nous enseigne en outre que ceux qui traversent l'eau (ὕδωρ) ne doivent plus rien traîner avec eux de l'armée ennemie, une fois qu'ils ont émergé. Si en effet l'ennemi remonte avec eux, ils demeurent ses esclaves même après l'eau: n'ont-ils pas gardé le tyran vivant au lieu de l'engloutir dans l'abîme? Cela signifie, si l'on dégage le sens caché, que tous ceux qui passent par l'eau sacramentelle du baptême (τὸ μυστικὸν ὕδωρ ἐν τῷ βαπτίσματι) doivent faire mourir dans l'eau toute l'armée des vices qui leur font la guerre....⁶⁹

Similarly in his exposition of the Canticle, the reference to the 'vineyards of Engaddi' (Cant. 1.13) implicitly evokes for Gregory the wine which is consecrated at the celebration of the eucharist, and thus, again, in sacramental terms, the soul or Bride at the culmination of her ascent is seen as participating in a union with the Divine which is the counterpart of the union which is believed to be realised at the eucharist and is symbolized in its rites. Hence,

she now becomes the mother of the divine cluster of grapes that bloomed, that is, flourished before the Passion, and during the Passion poured out its wine. For after the divine drama of the Passion the wine that cheers the heart (Ps. 103. 15) is rightly called the blood of the grape.⁷⁰

This sense of the interpenetration of different levels of spiritual experience must clearly have a distinctive effect on language. The sacramental terminology is indeed symbolic; yet the notion that, typolog-

ically, the biblical references to the mysteries of the sacraments foreshadow a continuing reality which takes place in the individual soul imbues the vocabulary with something of the force of literal truth. The literal and symbolic value of the terms is defined by context alone, and full appreciation of their significance is dependent on the readers' understanding of sacramental theology. It seems, indeed, that the vital relationship which Gregory established between the sacraments and the ascent to mystic union is grounded in their common verbal associations with the central Christian symbols of, for example, water, blood and wine. Thus his collation of these distinct doctrinal propositions effectively brought to bear on mystical theology the multifarious resonances which sacramental language already intrinsically possessed in the minds of spiritually committed readers and writers alike.

The threefold division of the mystic way: purgation, illumination, contemplation.

Gregory thus pressed into service a range of symbolism whose immense evocative power permitted a unique fluidity of thought and expression. It has, however, been implicit in the examples of sacramental language cited above, that there is some element of formality in the association of the individual sacraments with different aspects of the contemplative ascent. In fact, while Gregory's fundamental conception of the mystic way as progressive transformation into Christ is itself largely unschematic, he does envisage three distinct though not inflexible stages in the ascent. This division clearly underlies his summary of the meaning of the Canticle:

But when she (i.e. the Bride) has torn herself from her attachment to sin, and by that mystic kiss she yearns to bring her mouth close to the fountain of light (Cant. 4.15),

then does she become beautiful, radiant with the light of truth, having washed away the dark stain of ignorance.

She is compared to a steed (Cant. 1.8) because of the speed of her progress, to a dove (Cant. 2.10) because of the agility of her mind. Like a steed she races through all she perceives by sense or by reason (τὸ φαινόμενον); and she soars like a dove until she comes to rest with longing under the shade of the apple tree (Cant. 2.3). That which overshadows her the text calls an apple tree instead of a cloud (ἀντινεφέλης). But then she is encompassed by a divine night (θείας νυκτός, Cant. 3.13), during which her spouse approaches but does not reveal himself.⁷¹

Subsequent theologians defined the three stages more precisely as purgation, illumination and contemplation or union. Gregory's concept of their several characteristics and their association with the sacraments of the church is described by Daniélou:

le baptême correspond à la première voie sous son double aspect de purification (κάθαρσις) et d'illumination (φωτισμός), la Confirmation correspond à la seconde par son double aspect d'obscurcissement du monde visible (νεφέλη) et d'élévation vers le monde invisible (περιστέρα), enfin l'Eucharistie est en rapport avec la vie mystique à la fois comme union (ἀνάκρασις) et comme sortie hors du monde et de soi (ἔκστασις). La vie sacramentelle, est vraiment conçue comme une 'mystagogie', comme une initiation progressive qui conduit l'âme jusqu'aux sommets de la vie mystique, jusqu'à la 'sobre ivresse'.⁷²

The basic threefold division of the mystic life was a development from Origen's philosophy, which was doubtless transmitted to Gregory by his brother Basil - as, indeed, was the decisive additional association of the three books of Solomon, that is, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Canticle, with the purgative, illuminative and contemplative stages of the ascent respectively.⁷³ Daniélou argues that Basil himself had comprehended the entire process in terms of baptism and that Gregory's inclusion of the sacraments of confirmation and the eucharist in the scheme was therefore entirely original.⁷⁴ The most important point to be noted here, however - and it is one which was crucial for the later development of mysticism and the vocabulary peculiar to it - is that

Gregory's evolution of a properly mystical theology was from the first inseparable from his attempt to forge an appropriate terminology, and, further, that the raw materials of language drawn from diverse sources with which he worked were themselves already to some extent categorized according to the associations they themselves possessed. Thus, in the case of the ultimate contemplative stage with which this thesis is primarily concerned, the eucharistic terminology which he applied to it, and the expressions derived from both the Canticle and, as has been suggested earlier, from Platonism, were already connected with the highest spiritual states, and Gregory's achievement was in effect to redirect and consolidate their proper significance within the context of a thoroughly Christian mystical theology.

Purgatorial vocabulary.

However, while the focus of this thesis dictates that primary emphasis should be given to the vocabulary associated with the third way, its distinctive characteristics cannot be fully understood without some reference to the language normally connected with the preceding stages of the ascent. In linguistic terms, the initial purgative stage is perhaps the least complex. As a result of its inherent human orientation, the terminology which expresses it is largely unscathed by the problems involved in the attempt to communicate anything concerning the ineffable nature of God Himself - though it is subject to the same conditions as all use of language in religious contexts and the vocabulary associated with baptism shares the peculiarities of all sacramental language.

Illuminative vocabulary.

It must always be stressed that, for Gregory, this purificatory process and all that it entails theologically and linguistically, is prolonged throughout the mystic ascent; however, the illuminative stage

is denoted principally by its emphasis on discursive thought as a means of attaining the degree of knowledge of God which is accessible to human faculties. Thus, by analogy with the created universe which is within the range of his experience, man may deduce something of the attributes, though not the essence, of its Creator. Gregory demonstrates this notion by comparison with the relationship between the human artist and his work:

For we can see Him, Who has 'made all things in wisdom' (Ps. 103. 24), by the process of inference through the wisdom that is reflected in the universe. It is just as in human works of art, where the mind can in a sense see the author of the ordered structure that is before it, inasmuch as he has left his artistry in his work. But notice that what we see here is not the substance of the craftsman, but merely the artistic skill that he has impressed in his work. So too, when we consider the order of creation, we form an image not of the substance but of the wisdom of Him Who has done all things wisely.⁷⁵

The idea is also supported by his exegesis of Exodus 19. 16-19, where the sounding of the trumpets before Moses enters the tabernacle which represents God's transcendence is interpreted as the manifestation of divine glory throughout the whole of creation.⁷⁶

The specifically linguistic significance of Gregory's doctrine on this point is suggested in an important passage from his Commentary on Ecclesiastes:

Thus in speaking (λόγοις) of God, when there is a question of His essence, then is the 'time to keep silence'. When, however, it is a question of His operation (ἀγαθῆς ἐνεργείας), a knowledge (γνώσις) of which can come down even to us, that is the 'time to speak' of His omnipotence by telling of His works and explaining His deeds, and to use words to this extent.⁷⁷

Clearly Gregory acknowledges the appropriateness of language in the context of discussion of the comprehensible aspects of God, which are His activities in respect of man, but maintains his conviction of its

inadequacy as a means of expressing anything of the nature of God Himself. There is thus implicit in his assertions a recognition that so long as language preserves its fundamental relationship with rational perception, it is peculiarly appropriate to the illuminative stage of the mystic ascent, where the importance attached to the process of inference makes this preeminently the sphere of intellectual apprehension. Indeed, the prose in which Gregory formulates experience of this order, like that of his theoretical statements concerning religious language, is frequently characterized by a sureness and clarity which accords well with its function as a stimulus to the intellect. The transition from discourse of this order to the use of a mystery language, (whose special characteristics will be considered below⁷⁸) when Gregory moves from discussion of the illuminative stage to depict the final phase of the mystic way, is strongly marked in such passages as the extract from Sermon XI of the commentary on the Canticle which has been cited above.⁷⁹ Language, in the context of illuminative theology, operates effectively and unambiguously as a medium for analysis and persuasion. A perfect cooperation obtains between the vehicle and the meaning it conveys, and prose of this order is characterized by its poise and cadence. Moreover, with regard to the individual elements of vocabulary, Charles Journet argues in his general study of the theoretical justification for negative mystical language, that, from a Christian standpoint, adjectives such as 'wise' and 'good', whose applicability to God is deduced from observation of the properties of the created world, have an absolute sense only when they are employed to describe God's being.⁸⁰ He cites Aquinas in support of his claims:

Such words, in fact, open out upon an Abyss of Simplicity wherein the perfection they signify is not destroyed or submerged or preserved in its entirety (God truly is; He is truly one, truly good, truly wise; formally one, formally good, formally

wise). Indeed, the perfection such terms signify can receive in God alone, and for the first time, its real fulness of meaning. The words being, unity, goodness, wisdom are more true of God than they could ever be of creatures; they are 'by priority said of God rather than of creatures' - 'per prius dicuntur de Deo quam de creaturis' (S.T., I, 13, 6).... Being thus exalted, the perfection such words signify is identified with all the other perfections in the supreme, supereminent, unnamed, formal conception of the Godhead.⁸¹

Further conclusions may be reached concerning the language which characterizes the illuminative stage by enquiring more closely into the manner of analogical supposition. It is, inevitably, through man's interpretation of his sensual experience of the universe that he is able to comprehend its Creator. Gregory emphasizes this in his

Commentary on Ecclesiastes:

The life of the senses, however, which is transacted by the operation of our sense faculties, is bestowed upon our nature that the perception of sense phenomena (τὴν τῶν φαινομένων γνῶσιν) might lead the soul to the knowledge of the invisible (τὴν τῶν ἀοράτων ἐπίγνωσιν), as the Book of Wisdom says: 'By the grandeur of the beauty of creatures we may by analogy see the creator of all things' (Wisd. 13.5).⁸²

He goes on to affirm, however, that the soul possesses spiritual faculties which correspond to the corporeal senses and permit a parallel apprehension of spiritual realities.⁸³ Thus, in the Commentary on the

Canticle:

There is another lesson that we are incidentally taught by the deeper study of this book: it is that we have two sets of senses (αἴσθησις), one corporeal (σωματική) and the other spiritual (θειοτέρα), as the Word tells us in the book of Proverbs: 'Thou shalt find the sense of God'. There is a correspondence between the motions and movements of the soul and the sense organs of the body, as we learn from the words of the Spirit given in our text. Wine and milk, it is true, are distinguished by the taste; but the spiritual realities which they signify are grasped rather by the intellectual power of the soul. A kiss is an operation of the sense of touch: in a kiss two pairs of lips touch. There is, however, a spiritual faculty of touch, which comes in contact with the Word, and this is actuated by a spiritual and immaterial sense

of touch (διὰ τινος ἄσωμάτου καὶ νοητῆς ἐπαφῆς ἐνεργουμένη), as it is said: 'Our hands have handled the word of life' (I John 1,1). So too the smell of the divine perfume does not proceed from the smell of our nostrils but from a spiritual faculty which draws in the sweet odor of Christ by an inhalation of the spirit.⁸⁴

The linguistic situation which ensues from this is interesting and in several respects problematic. In the first instance, the two applications of sense language - physical and spiritual - are in no way distinguished from one another verbally. Correct interpretation of their significance is to some extent conditional upon their context, but is ultimately dependent upon the reader's insight.

Further, the range of vocabulary which is associated with the spiritual senses is essentially metaphoric, yet it both utilizes and categorically repudiates its normal sensual connotations. Thus, in his article on early notions of the spiritual senses, Karl Rahner aptly classifies expressions of this kind as "mi - figuratives, mi - réelles".⁸⁵ Sense language is, in fact, both logical in its operation, in so far as it works by analogy with physical modes of apprehension, and, simultaneously, entirely non-rational, in that it implies a means of perceiving God which is itself the reverse of intellectual even though it forms the basis for speculative thought. Indeed, it may be that it was the radical ambiguity attached to the language of the spiritual senses which made it peculiarly appropriate as a vehicle for expressing the heterogeneous tenets of Christian theology.⁸⁶

The possible importance of this last contention becomes particularly apparent in the light of one central point to emerge from Rahner's article - that is, the association which Origen established and perpetuated

between the spiritual senses and Christ. He demonstrates that,

En s'appuyant sur l'Écriture, Origène précise souvent l'objet de chaque sens. Le texte suivant nous servira d'exemple: '.... Le Christ devient l'objet de chaque sens de l'âme. Il se nomme la vraie Lumière pour illuminer les yeux de l'âme; le Verbe, pour être étendu; le Pain de Vie, pour être goûté. De même il est appelé huile d'onction et nard pour que l'âme se délecte à l'odeur de Logos; il est devenu 'le Verbe fait chair' palpable et saisissable, pour que l'homme intérieur puisse saisir le Verbe de Vie. Le même Verbe de Dieu est tout cela (Lumière, Verbe, etc.), il le devient dans une oraison fervente et il ne permet pas qu'aucun des sens spirituels soit dépourvu de graces'.
(In Cantic., lib II. PG. XIII, 142A).⁸⁷

Origen's trinitarian theology is, however, generally acknowledged to be questionable and the distinctions between God as Father and Son characteristically blurred. He seems inclined, moreover, to define all knowledge of God as in some sense mystical. Yet it might be argued - albeit with many qualifications - that this in itself made his philosophy peculiarly attractive to Gregory. It has been emphasized that the essential spiritual impulse for Gregory, which is towards progressive transformation into Christ, finally transcends all categories of the mystical ascent. Thus, in his exposition of Exodus 33. 21-22, Gregory interprets the 'rock' as an allusion to Christ and claims that,

.... c'est dans le Christ que nous croyons que sont contenus tous les biens espérés, lui en qui nous savons que 'sont tous les trésors' des biens, celui qui est en quelque bien, celui-là est forcément dans le Christ qui contient tout bien.⁸⁸

Clearly there is no suggestion in Gregory's theology that Christ is in any way secondary to God ⁸⁹ - an intermediary to be repudiated by the soul seeking union with the absolute God. Yet, without impairing the truth of this assertion, it should also be recognized that, through the incarnation, a unique relationship exists between humanity

and Christ as the fusion of God and man. Hence it is, significantly, Christ who is the object of the spiritual senses. Similarly, the language in which Gregory speaks specifically of Christ is sometimes characterized by an appropriate anthropomorphism and positive lyrical vigour which is absent from his discussions of the absolute Godhead.⁹⁰ Most important of all, perhaps, in his interpretation of the episode of the burning bush in Exodus 3, Gregory directly identifies Christ Incarnate with the fulfilment of the illuminative stage of the mystic ascent:

Que si c'est d'un buisson d'épines que s'allume la flamme par laquelle l'âme du prophète est illuminée, cela non plus ne sera pas sans intérêt pour notre recherche. Si en effet 'la vérité est Dieu et si elle est aussi 'lumière' (φῶς) - ce sont là les expressions sublimes que l'Évangile emploie pour désigner le Dieu qui s'est manifesté pour nous dans la chair -, il suit que la conduite de la vertu nous amène à la connaissance de cette lumière qui s'est abaissée jusqu'à la nature humaine.⁹¹

Linguistically, the connexion is decisive. Because there is inherent in the nature of Christ a human focus which is in one sense accessible to man's intellectual apprehension, language which preserves its normal relationship with noetic or sensual perception must have a valid and material function in conjunction with religious experience of this order. Yet having admitted the general association between Christ and the illuminative stage of the mystic ascent, it is still necessary to determine more precisely the manner in which language operates within this situation. Journet, in fact, argues that the ordinary connotations of words are effectively heightened in this context and their significance infinitely extended by virtue of the fact that each individual divine attribute must be understood to imply all the rest. He asserts that it is only the analytic character of human thought as it is reflected in language which inevitably fragments the

essential unity of God:

It will split up into a multitude of concepts which will signify so many pure and absolute perfections. Each of these perfections will signify explicitly a certain particular aspect of the total richness, that aspect being conceived as freed from all limitations and carried up to the infinite level (infinite unity, infinite goodness, etc). But each perfection, while remaining incapable of signifying explicitly more than that single aspect, will doubtless implicitly admit the indivisible divine plenitude, as necessarily presupposed and connoted but nevertheless unformulated.⁹²

The point is an important one, since it conveys simultaneously both the genuine appositeness of language in this area and the special conditions attached to the inclusion of language in a religious context at all. It serves, moreover, to elucidate further the question which was posed earlier in this chapter concerning possible modes of manipulating language to communicate in some measure the inexpressible truths of religion.⁹³ Thus, in the first instance, Journet's emphasis on the extent to which statements about God are conditional upon human perception and methods of articulation must involve the conclusion that, even allowing for the presumed assent by reader and writer to the notion that language is perfected when it is applied to God, such propositions can never be accepted as unqualified embodiments of the nature of God Himself. To categorize positive assertions about Christ as descriptive without imposing some restrictions on the term would therefore, it seems, be misleading. In the continuation of the passage alluded to above which celebrates Christ as the Good Shepherd, Gregory himself astutely anticipates such demurs:

'Shew me, O thou whom my soul loveth' (Cant. 1. 6). This is the name I give Thee, for Thy name 'is above all names' (Phil. 2. 9) and is inexpressible and inaccessible to all rational creatures (πάση λογικῇ φύσει ἄρραστόν τε καὶ ἀχώρητον). But this name expresses Thy goodness and the attitude of my soul towards Thee (ἡ τῆς Ψυχῆς μου περὶ σε σχέσις).⁹⁴

A shift in the function of nominal epithets has taken place here, so that they are no longer directly descriptive of the nature of their object which is Christ, but rather indicate obliquely his relationship with humanity.⁹⁵

The second point of major significance to emerge from Journet's observation is the intensely positive quality of the language in this context. It has, indeed, already been stressed that such phraseology is peculiarly appropriate to the illuminative stage of the mystic ascent. However, Gregory's insistence in theological terms that the entire contemplative process is effectively one of perpetual transformation into Christ must in some sense militate against rigid distinctions between the second and final mystic ways. Linguistically, therefore, it will follow that the mode of expression which appertains in particular to illuminative theology will nevertheless retain its validity even in relation to the highest contemplative states.

The ensuing coalescence of distinct terminologies in the area of unitive theology is among the most remarkable and significant facets of Gregory's achievement. While on the one hand asserting the fundamental transcendence and hence inexpressibility of the Godhead, Gregory is thus able to affirm simultaneously and without inconsistency that,

The only name you could find to express that ineffable nature and power is that of the Good (ἀγαθόν).

It is this Good, beyond all good, that truly is, and by itself it has given and continues to give all things the power to come into existence and to remain in being.⁹⁶

The attempt to perfect words through their application to God has been shown to be essentially a characteristic of illuminative language, and it is, in fact, interestingly developed here in the effort to confer

an absolute value on the state of 'being'. The effect is comparable when, in the Commentary on the Canticle, Gregory refers to God as "Him Who is forever" (τῷ ἀεὶ ὄντι)⁹⁷; the anticipated syntactical pattern is thwarted, and the verb has no complement, but is completed only by an adverbial reiteration of its meaning. Elsewhere Gregory endeavours to counter the retrogressive tendencies of words by qualifying them with adjectives suggestive of perfection. Hence God is designated "eternal beauty" (τοιοῦτον καλὸν ὄν)⁹⁸ and the mystic union with Him described as "that spotless and divine marriage" (τῆς θείας τε καὶ ἀχράντου μετ' αὐτοῦ συμβιώσεως)⁹⁹. It is as if Gregory seeks to restore language to its prelapsarian condition by nullifying its potentially corruptive sensuality and re-applying its inherently pure connotations. The point is, of course, crucial in relation to the entire marriage imagery of the Canticle, as was suggested earlier, where the important connexion between Gregory's linguistic theory and his doctrinal insistence on the necessity of rechanneling degenerative human characteristics as aids in the mystic ascent was also strongly emphasized.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, in several important respects, the eucharistic imagery which Gregory habitually connects with the ultimate mystic union does not differ in its function from the sacramental imagery which properly pertains to the earlier stages of the ascent. His exposition of Cant. 2. 4-5 is comparable with his treatment of baptismal language, for example, and is equally remarkable for the positive sensuous quality of its prose:

Her thirst has so greatly increased that she is not satisfied with the cup of wisdom; her thirst is not quenched even though a whole cup is poured into her mouth, but she asks to be brought into the very wine cellar, and have her mouth held right beneath

the vats bubbling over with sweet wine. She asks to see the cluster crushed in the vats, to see the vine that produced the cluster and the Husbandman of 'the true vine' Who made the cluster so sweet and nourishing.

It would be superfluous for me to explain all this, for the spiritual meaning of each detail is manifest. Surely the mystery which the bride wants to see is how the Bridegroom's garments become red by treading the winepress, as the Prophet says: 'Why is thy apparel red, and thy garment like theirs that tread the winepress?' (Is. 63.2). This, then, is the meaning of her desire: she wants to enter the house where the mystery of the wine is enacted.¹⁰¹

The impetus of the passage clearly lies in Gregory's sense of the profound association between the sacramental and mystic lives, which necessarily implicates the passion in each stage of the contemplative ascent. On a doctrinal level, this denotes the possibility that man is able through Christ to participate in the absolute Godhead, and its particular bearing on language is forcefully illustrated in this quotation. The words are not descriptive of the nature of God Himself, but rather, as in the case of illuminative language, aptly convey in metaphor something of the relationship which exists between the soul and God, now at the culmination of the mystic way. Moreover, since Gregory repudiates any final distinction between Christ and God, the terminology centring on the concept of the spiritual senses, which attaches primarily to the second stage of the ascent, in fact attains its fullest significance only in the context of unitive theology. Thus the eucharistic imagery and the bold allusion in the language of the spiritual senses to the 'taste' of Christ become fused in this supremely affirmative evocation of the nature of mystic union.¹⁰²

Unitive vocabulary

However, having suggested some of the ways in which the language of the third way operates according to the same rationale as illuminative terminology, it is essential to identify the exact sense in which it is autonomous. The divergence, like the similarity of function, is,

for Gregory, firmly grounded in theology. Daniélou provides a convenient recapitulation of the doctrinal position, which was explored in greater depth in the early part of this chapter:

La seconde voie est donc bien le domaine de l'intelligence. C'est à ce titre qu'elle correspond à ce qu'on appellera 'vie illuminative'. Ceci est surtout caractéristique de Grégoire. Pour Origène, en effet, la troisième voie est encore activité noétique. Pour Grégoire, elle est hyper-noétique et proprement mystique. L'âme est jetée hors des voies ordinaires de la connaissance. Et tout le domaine intellectuel est rejeté dans la seconde voie.¹⁰³

Daniélou has claimed that it is precisely in respect of his concept of the super-intellectual character of the unitive way that Gregory may be regarded as the originator of the Christian tradition of mystical theology.¹⁰⁴

The inevitably profound impact on language of a theology in which the powers of the intellect are totally transcended in an impulse of love is manifest throughout Gregory's writings. Indeed, it might be argued that just as the positive quality of illuminative language and the sense in which it functions according to rational principles continue to obtain in the context of the third way, so the problem of divine incomprehensibility which undermines the normal relationship between language and intellectual perception at this level is also necessarily reflected in the language of the preceding stages - particularly in the emphatically non-rational connotations of the sensual and sacramental terminologies.¹⁰⁵

It seems, however, that some of the distinctive characteristics of unitive language have their roots in traditions which flourished prior to the era in which Gregory wrote. His eucharistic imagery, for example, while clearly located firmly within the liturgical experience

of the orthodox Christian, also draws through Platonism on the ritual language of the hellenistic mystery religions.¹⁰⁶ The point is developed in some detail by Daniélou on the basis of a discussion of the diverse meanings which Gregory attached to the term 'μυστήριον' itself.¹⁰⁷

Daniélou discerns four principal senses of the word in Gregory's writings. Of these, its application to the hidden inner significance of Scripture and its allied association, partly pagan in origin, with initiation into the rites of the sacraments were both decisive influences on his evolution of a mystical terminology - as well in respect of his inclusion of sacramental vocabulary in a mystical context as in his general persuasion of the profundity of biblical language and the necessity for spiritual commitment as a condition for proper interpretation of its substance. But perhaps the most important sense here is its implicit relationship with the highest states of mystical apprehension:

Nous trouvons d'abord en ce sens τὰ μυστήρια....

Ainsi Grégoire parle-t-il de 'Benjamin instruit des mystères du Paradis' (XLIV, 384 A), ou de 'David qui parcourait les mystères célestes' (XLV, 744C). Nous notons tout de suite que dans ces divers passages, τὰ μυστήρια est en rapport avec le degré le plus haut de la vie spirituelle, l' 'extase' de Benjamin, le 'rapt' de Paul au Paradis, le 'voyage au ciel' de David. Les 'mystères' ici désignent donc proprement l'objet de la connaissance 'mystique'.

Il est remarquable, en effet, que le mot apparaisse particulièrement pour désigner les deux cas les plus typiques de connaissance mystique, celui de Paul et celui de Moïse.¹⁰⁸

A complex pattern of correspondences thus emerges here, grounded in the connexion which Gregory establishes between the 'mysteries' and the unitive stage of the contemplative ascent in terms of their common insistence on the essentially ecstatic character of the spiritual experience involved. The mystery language which Gregory absorbed into

his vocabulary, therefore, intrinsically reinforced his assertions as to the fundamentally non-rational quality of the ultimate mystical awareness, which informs his paradoxical definition of it as, simultaneously, a penetration to the centre of the soul and a stretching out beyond the self in an impulse of love.¹⁰⁹

The immense significance linguistically of this notion of ecstasy has already become to some extent apparent in Gregory's frequent recourse to the non-rationalistic terminology associated with the spiritual senses as a means of charting the most advanced levels of mystical experience. It is implied with particular trenchancy in his use of the noun 'ἔρως', as Daniélou demonstrates, in connexion with the third way of the contemplative ascent:

L'ἔρως est donc un aspect de l'ἀγάπη, sa forme le plus intense, sa ferveur. C'est toujours cet aspect qu'il présente dans les textes où nous le trouvons L'ἀγάπη nous laissait dans la participation, dans le miroir. L'ἔρως nous lance au delà, vers une relation à Dieu 'tel qu'il est'. Il exprime ainsi le sommet de l'ἀγάπη, l'extase où l'âme est impatiente de tous les voiles qui la séparent encore de Dieu - et l'aspect extatique que l'union à Dieu garde toujours.¹¹⁰

While he diverges from Anders Nygren with regard to several key aspects of the meaning of ἔρως and ἀγάπη in Gregory's works, Daniélou is in complete agreement with him concerning the suggestions of intensity and, indeed, irrationality which are inherent in the concept of ἔρως.¹¹¹ Gregory's distinction between the concepts of ἔρως and ἀγάπη and his application of their separate connotations are nevertheless far from consistent - indeed, it will be shown in the following chapter that Ps.-Dionysius, whose Christian orthodoxy, unlike Gregory's, has been seriously challenged, is both more astute than Gregory, and more faithful to Christian principles, in reconciling the platonist notion of

ἔρωσ with the Christian doctrine of ἀγάπη. The prominence in Gregory's treatises of symbols traditionally coupled with ἔρωσ has been indicated above,¹¹² and further examination of the symbol of the arrow which was alluded to there serves to illustrate the point in greater detail. In an interesting passage from the Commentary on the Canticle, for example, the platonist connotations of the symbol are interwoven with its biblical suggestions and associated, moreover, with a concept of ecstatic ἀγάπη:

The Bride says: 'Because I am wounded with love' (Τετρωμένη... ἀγάπης ἐγώ). Here she explains the dart (βέλος) that has gone right through her heart, and the Bowman is Love (ἀγάπη). From the Scriptures we learn that 'God is Love' (Ἀγάπη) (I John 4.8), and also that He sends forth His only begotten Son as His 'chosen arrow' (βέλος) (Is. 49.2) to the elect, dipping the triple point at its tip in the Spirit of life

As the soul then is raised up by these divine elevations, she sees within herself the sweet dart of love that has wounded her (τὸ γλυκὸ τῆς ἀγάπης βέλος ἐν ἑαυτῇ, ᾧ ἐτρώθη), and she glories in the wound: 'I am wounded with love'. Indeed it is a good wound (καλοῦ τραύματος) and a sweet pain (γλυκειῆς πληγῆς) by which life penetrates the soul; for by the tearing of the arrow she opens, as it were, a door, an entrance into herself. For no sooner does she receive the dart of love than the image of archery is transformed into a scene of nuptial joy.¹¹³

The context of the passage and its bridal imagery provide indisputable evidence of its reference to the final stage of mystic union, and the symbol of the arrow which inflicts a wound of love powerfully evokes the searing intensity of the soul's experience at this juncture. It conveys, moreover, a sense of the passive condition of the contemplative soul. Yet the violent imagery of wounding is qualified emphatically by the superficially incongruous epithets, "good" and "sweet". In the paradox thus created, the sensuous implications of the language are enforced, yet at the same time curiously held in abeyance, and the effect is to reproduce metaphorically not only the nature but also something of the essential otherness of the situation and its contrariety to normal modes of intellectual perception and expression.

This overriding sense of the non-rationality of contemplative experience, which is reflected in both the ἔπος-symbolism and in the paradoxical character of the formulae used to describe it, also has some considerable bearing on the biblical vocabulary which forms the basis of Gregory's mystical terminology. His main scriptural sources, it has been shown, are the Book of Exodus and the Canticle of Canticles, and the intertwining of the strands of bridal and Mosaic imagery to articulate the ascent to mystic union are illustrated in an extremely interesting passage from the Commentary on the Canticle:

'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one: for my head is full of dew, and my locks with the drops of night' (νυκτὸς) (Cant. 5.2). Our interpretation will help you to grasp the meaning of this text. Moses' vision of God began with light (φωτὸς) (Exod. 19.18); afterwards God spoke to him in a cloud (νεφέλης) (Exod. 20.21). But when Moses rose higher and became more perfect, he saw God in the darkness (γνόφω) (Exod. 24. 15-18).

Now the doctrine we are taught here is as follows. Our initial withdrawal from wrong and erroneous ideas of God is a transition from darkness to light (ἀπὸ τοῦ σκοτίου εἰς φῶς). Next comes a closer awareness of hidden things (κρυπτῶν), and, by this the soul is guided through sense phenomena (φαινομένων) to the world of the invisible (ἀόρατον). And this awareness is a kind of cloud (νεφέλη), which overshadows all appearances, and slowly guides and accustoms the soul to look towards what is hidden (κρύφιον). Next the soul makes progress through all these stages and goes on higher, and as she leaves below all that human nature can attain, she enters within the secret chamber of the divine knowledge (ἐντὸς τῶν ἀδύτων τῆς θεογνωσίας γίνεται), and here she is cut off on all sides by the divine darkness (γνόφω). Now she leaves outside all that can be grasped by sense or by reason (φαινομένου...καταλαμβανομένα), and the only thing left for her contemplation is the invisible and the incomprehensible (ἀόρατόν...ἀκατάληπτον). And here God is, as the Scriptures tell us in connection with Moses: 'But Moses went to the dark cloud (γνόφον) wherein God was' (Exod. 20.21).¹¹⁴

The ultimate mystic union is envisaged as taking place in a darkness (usually σκοτός), which - according to the scriptural account - is also closely allied with the cloud (νεφέλη), often by implication the dark cloud (γνόφος) which encompasses God.

The background of this notion, which is absolutely central to negative mystical theology, is a useful index to its precise significance in Gregory's theology. His immediate debt was to Philo, whose allegorical interpretation of the life of Moses supplied the foundation for Gregory's entire treatment of the topic. Philo describes the culmination of Moses' experience in these terms:

Moses' entered into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of the mortal nature, and, in himself and his life displayed for all to see, he has set before us like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it.¹¹⁵

The concept of darkness as H.-C. Puech observes in his article, "Le ténèbre mystique chez le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite et dans la tradition patristique", was also frequently associated by Philo with cloud imagery in consequence of the implied relationship between them in Exodus.¹¹⁶ But the connotations of 'darkness' for Philo, according to Puech, are evidence of the essentially intellectual quality of Philonian mysticism, which sets him in a "tradition allégorico-mystique"¹¹⁷ in many ways alien to Gregory. He asserts that the Philonian image denotes the progressive stripping away of the material elements which impede human apprehension of the divine. The image is thus suggestive of a genuinely reductive process.¹¹⁸

The most important assessment of Philo's position in the present context comes, however, from Daniélou, who focusses on the linguistic rather than the generally philosophical aspects of the question and isolates the specific sense in which Gregory deviates from his predecessor:

Pour celui-ci (i.e. Philo) l'entrée de Moïse dans le γνόφος signifie la quête de l'âme à la recherche de l'être qui est sans forme. C'est le dépouillement des images, qui est un élément de toute mystique, naturelle ou divine, mais qui n'excède pas le plan philosophique de la sagesse. Grégoire use parfois du mot en ce sens, mais pour lui la ténèbre, c'est la réalité positive de l'excès de la lumière divine par rapport à tout esprit créé. Donc ce n'est plus la présence de l'élément charnel qui fait écran entre Dieu et l'âme. Même pour l'ange, Dieu reste ténèbre. Ce qui apparaît ici, c'est la transcendance absolue de Dieu par rapport à toute créature, et c'est là ce qui jette l'âme qui cherche dans les voies de l'extase.¹¹⁹

Several pertinent issues are raised by Daniélou here. It is demonstrable, in the first instance, that the speculative character of Philonian 'darkness' made some impact on Gregory's thinking. In the passage quoted above,¹²⁰ 'darkness' seems in some respects to imply a negation of normal modes of apprehension, and other examples may be adduced of Gregory's attempts to provide a highly logical account of this sense of his metaphor:

C'est le lieu nommé 'ténèbre' (γνόφος) par l'Écriture, ce qui signifie, comme on l'a dit, l'incognoscibilité (ἀγνωστόν) et l'invisibilité (ἀθεώρητον).¹²¹

But Daniélou goes on to argue that the most forceful connotations of the 'darkness' metaphor in Gregory's writings are positive. It seems, in fact, that in designating the final stage of mystic union 'darkness', Gregory is seeking to express the immeasurable extent to which the being of God exceeds the knowledge of Him which was achieved analogically during the second stage of the ascent and represented, by contrast, as 'illumination'. It therefore becomes a metaphor for the divine transcendence. As such, the term is relative, in that it denotes something of the nature of God in respect of man; but it is also simultaneously absolute, in that it conveys some sense of the being of God as He is in Himself without regard to any element of His creation. More remark-

ably, it also seems to concede the possibility of man's attaining, in spite of the divine transcendence, a real apprehension of the unknowable Godhead. The notion that for the bride, enveloped in the divine darkness, "the only thing left for her contemplation is the invisible and the incomprehensible",¹²² effectively intimates both the existence of a mode of perception independent of the inadequate faculties of the human intellect and the conditions in which it obtains.

It is clear, therefore, that the idea of 'divine darkness' in Gregory's theology embraces a multiplicity of meanings expressive of the various facets of the relationship between God and man. Puech summarizes the inherent ambiguity of the term in connexion with the Pseudo-Dionysius in an interesting paragraph which places the issue in a wider context:

En réalité, γνόφος ou σκοτός chez Denys est un terme ambivalent qui revêt deux significations réciproques: une signification subjective, concernant l'attitude de l'âme qui contemple, et une signification objective, relative au caractère inaccessible, à l'absolue transcendance de la Lumière contemplée. L'une commande l'autre: c'est parce que Dieu reste inconcevable en soi que l'état du sujet sera 'inconnnaissance'. La Ténèbre figurera, en fin d'analyse, le lieu et la modalité de l'appréhension mystique, supérieure à l'opposition d'un sujet connaissant et d'un objet connu, mais déterminée par leur relation qui ne peut ici que demeurer inadéquation.¹²³

Puech's resolution of the question into its two major aspects is, in fact, especially stimulating in conjunction with Lossky's article on the background of Dionysius' negative theology. Lossky identifies two basic philosophical systems in the van of the Dionysian corpus.¹²⁴ The first, exemplified in particular by Clement of Alexandria, attached paramount importance to the transcendence of the Deity as the main obstacle to human knowledge of His nature; the second, however, which was most clearly articulated by Origen and the Neoplatonists, insisted

on man's innate ability to contemplate Him after the stripping away of all human imperfections.^{124a} Lossky acknowledges the importance of the Cappadocian fathers as moving towards a synthesis of these disparate streams. Yet he signally fails to appreciate the significance of Gregory's achievement in this respect, and, while insisting that Dionysius was the first writer to establish "une démarcation nette entre la théologie négative et la théologie positive",¹²⁵ seems to disregard the extent to which Dionysius' distinctions were already implicit in Gregory's theology. Yet the point must surely be a decisive one in documenting the evolution of the negative mystical tradition.¹²⁶

Puech, on the other hand, is confident in his conclusions that Gregory was both an innovator in respect of the notion of 'divine darkness' and a key figure in its transmission.¹²⁷ He asserts, moreover, that in Gregory of Nyssa the concept of 'darkness' seems to possess a personal, experiential quality, in addition to its traditional biblical connotations, which is unparalleled among early writers.¹²⁸ Some such inference seems inescapable in the light of passages of this nature from the Commentary on the Canticle:

Thus in our text the bride refers to the soul; God is called the Spouse, Whom she loves with all her heart and soul and strength. And consequently, having come, as she thinks, to the height of her hopes, and thinking that she is already united with her Beloved, she speaks of her more perfect participation in good as a 'bed', referring to the 'night' (νύκτα), the time of darkness (σκότους). By the 'night' she refers to the contemplation of the invisible (τῶν ἀοράτων τὴν θεωρίαν), just as Moses, who entered into the darkness (γνώσῳ) to the place where God was; and God, as the Prophet says, 'made the darkness (σκότος) his covert round about him' (Ps. 17.12).

Arriving at this point, the bride is then instructed that, far from attaining perfection, she has not even begun to approach it. Now, she says, that I have been deemed worthy of the nuptial rites, I rest as it were upon the 'bed' of all that I have hitherto understood. But I am suddenly introduced into the realm of the invisible (ἀοράτων), surrounded by the

divine darkness (τῆ θείᾳ ἄνοκτι), searching for Him Who is hidden in the 'dark cloud' (γνόφῳ). Then it was that I felt that love (ἀγάπη) for Him Whom I desired - though the Beloved Himself resists the grasp of our thoughts. And so 'I sought him in my bed by night' (Cant. 3.1), to learn of His substance, His beginning and His end, and in what His essence consists. But 'I found Him not'. I called Him by name - as though it were possible to find Him in a name when He cannot be named....
 and when I gave up every finite mode of comprehension (καταληπτικὴν ἔφοδόν), then it was that I found my Beloved by faith. And 'I will never let Him go', now that I have found Him, from the grasp of faith, until He comes within my 'chamber' (Cant. 3.4).¹²⁹

The impetus of the imagery remains unflinchingly biblical. Yet there seems to be a certain intense realism about the depiction of the bride's desperate search and a sensuous immediacy inherent in the language through which it is expressed.¹³⁰ Indeed, Gregory's collocation of the Canticle and the Moses narrative may in itself have made the biblical terminology which denoted the theory of the mystic way capable of conveying something of the unitive experience of the individual soul.

It is also characteristic of such passages, moreover, that they convey a powerful sense of the positive nature of mystic union. The state of intellectual darkness to which the soul submits is conceived of as being simultaneously cognitive or "light", but at this level the medium of knowledge is faith and loving consciousness of the divine presence. "Knowledge", therefore, has a special significance as a term denoting cognition of this order. Indeed, it is characteristic of Gregory to shift his ground linguistically where he analyses the nature of the soul's unitive apprehension of God: thus, for example, he similarly retains "vision" (ἰδέειν) as an objective term for mystical awareness, but he redefines it with reference to his own theology as a state in which "celui qui lève les yeux vers Lui ne cesse jamais de le désirer"¹³¹ - he applies a vocabulary normally associated with yearning,

that is, to a word which is normally cognate with terms of perception.¹³² In the first instance, however, he expresses the distinction between mystical and ordinary modes of cognition metaphorically, in the oxymoron λαμπρὸς γνόφος ('luminous darkness').¹³³ The stimulus to Gregory's literary resourcefulness is the need to evolve a vocabulary which corresponds to the principles of his theology. This involves overcoming, insofar as it is possible to do so, the spatial and temporal dimension which, in the passages from the commentaries on Ecclesiastes and the Canticle cited above,¹³⁴ Gregory recognizes as being integral to human modes of discerning and expressing natural phenomena, but which have no bearing on God or relevance to mystical awareness of the divine transcendence. The emphasis in Gregory's mystical theology is on the soul's reaffirmation of its own singleness through the exercise of recollection and its union with God by the rediscovery of the image of God within itself.¹³⁵ It is fundamentally opposed, that is, to the dualism of perceiver and perceived, which is implicit in man's means of apprehending natural phenomena, by appreciating their integrity and their relation to himself, and in language, whose function is to embody the distinctions between objects. Dualism is transcended, however, in the sphere of mystical experience: above all, the process of introversion, Gregory insists, is at the same time a passing beyond the self in an ecstasy of love. Through the use of verbal paradox, Gregory represents in language the coalescence of opposing concepts which is essential to his mystical theology, just as, it has been suggested, he seeks to overcome the pluralism which is implicit in affirmative epithets for God by conferring an absolute meaning on them and suggesting that each attribute of God involves all others.¹³⁶ He exploits the metaphoric potential of language, experimenting, in the case of λαμπρὸς γνόφος, with the positive and negative connotations of the words in order to express

the location of the unitive experience beyond what may be conceived and to suggest something of the excess and inadequacy which have been shown to be in different ways essential to man's apprehension of the divine.

This last point is developed in Daniélou's discussion of the negative elements in Gregory's vocabulary.¹³⁷ He bases his argument on an analysis of the significance of the term ἄδυτον (normally denoting 'sanctuary', but, literally, 'impenetrable') in Gregory's treatises. The word derives originally from the mystery religions and came to be applied consistently to the Holy of Holies in the temple of Jerusalem. The expression reached Gregory through Philo, having already acquired these associations and having, in fact, come to refer by extension to the inmost regions of the spirit. It therefore followed that the term became connected with spiritual experience of the most advanced order and, in particular, with ecstatic union with the Divine in the darkness. Daniélou cites as evidence a passage from the Life of Moses, since the notion occurs most frequently in this work:

'L'âme a quitté d'abord le pied de la montagne, et s'est séparée de tous ceux qui ont reculé devant l'ascension. Ensuite elle perçoit par ses oreilles les trompettes, à mesure qu'elle s'élève dans sa montée. Enfin elle pénètre dans le sanctuaire invisible de la connaissance mystique (εἰς τὸ ἀόρατον τῆς θεογνωσίας ἄδυτον)' (XLIV, 377 C-D).¹³⁸

Two important observations are prompted by this extract: firstly, the apophatic composition of the word ἄδυτον, which comprises a stem coupled with the negating prefix 'ἀ-'; and, secondly, its correlation with the term ἀόρατον, which is constructed on precisely the same principle. Daniélou also enumerates analogous formations - ἀπόρητον ('forbidden'), ἀνεπίβατον ('inaccessible'), ἀληπτον ('incomprehensible'),

ἄρρητον ('ineffable') - which repeatedly appear in conjunction with ἄδυτον.

Clearly, therefore, these epithets are based on a common model and may be assumed to fulfil a parallel and closely connected function. They do not propose assumptions about the essential being of God Himself, but rather reflect diverse aspects of His relationship to finite concepts. Their construction posits an imaginable condition for the divine, which is simultaneously retracted by the negating prefix. In effect, as with the other examples of unitive language discussed above, the apophatic mode becomes an affirmation that the reality to be expressed so far exceeds the compass of human intellect and expression that it can only be communicated in comparative terms by negation of the inadequate resources of language. The identical composition of the words, moreover, purports that, against this theoretical background, Gregory was evolving a technical vocabulary of unitive theology. This assertion is in some measure supported by making brief reference to his application of epithets with the prefix "ὑπερ-". Daniélou again cites the Life of Moses to illustrate this terminology:

'il se trouve dans les sanctuaires hypercélestes'
(ἐν τοῖς ὑπερουρανίοις ἄδύτοις) (XLIV, 1152A).¹³⁹

The conjunction of 'ὑπερουρανίοις' and 'ἄδύτοις' is immediately evident. Furthermore, the adjective will be seen to be constructed on the same pattern as the negative epithets and also to carry the same semantic force - though here the sense of excess is stated rather than implied. It might therefore be deduced that Gregory was developing a verbal formula and, as a direct result, assembling a coherent body of language which was inherently associated with the third way of the mystic ascent. It is in any case certain that the Pseudo-Dionysius assimilated

both versions of this formula as the proper language of mystical theology.

The self-consciousness of this attempt to develop a terminology which was as far as possible consonant with the demands of his mystical doctrine is also demonstrated by Gregory's further usage of derivatives of the verb 'δύειν' (literally, 'to lead' or 'go'). The point is intimately bound up with his insistence theologically on the paradoxical character of contemplative union: he defines it as an ecstatic going out of oneself (ἔξοδος) in quest for the Divine, which is at the same time a penetration (εἰσοδος) into the inmost regions of the soul where the image of God is implanted.¹⁴⁰ In linguistic terms, there is a marked paradox contained in the nouns through which he describes this experience. The stems of the two nouns are identical, which in fact serves to accentuate the precisely contradictory character of the prefixes. Daniélou explores a similar point with regard to Gregory's 'δύειν' vocabulary, and introduces an interesting passage from the Commentary on the Canticle:

'L'âme ayant pénétré (διαδυσείσα) par l'esprit plus à l'intérieur (εἰς τὸ ἐνδότερον) des lieux interdits (ἀπορρήτων), crie que sa course n'est plus seulement dans le vestibule (προθύροισι) des biens, mais dans les prémices de l'Esprit, par la grâce de qui, comme par un baiser, elle a été rendue digne de scruter les profondeurs de Dieu et de voir dans les sanctuaires (ἁδύτα) du Paradis les choses invisibles de Dieu (XLIV, 785A).¹⁴¹

The entire statement is erected on the basis of a bold oxymoron - 'διαδυσείσα ἁδύτα', 'penetrate the impenetrable' - which represents a reflection in language of the paradox which is at the centre of Gregory's mystical theology.¹⁴²

The foundation for Gregory's oxymoronic phraseology is thus

located in his concept of the third way and his insistence on its essentially ecstatic quality. In its thwarting of the normal complementary relationship between noun and adjective, it mirrors the total contravention of the reasoning faculty which is intrinsic to the experience of ecstasy. Clearly, therefore, the oxymoron was uniquely appropriate to Gregory's purpose and he exploited to the full its innate applicability to mystical experience. It did not, however, originate with him, as Hans Lewy establishes in his book on the early development of oxymoron, Sobria Ebrietas Untersuchungen zu Geschichte der antiken Mystik.¹⁴³ He observes judiciously that the practice of divesting words of certain aspects of their customary meaning by the inclusion of qualifying adjectives led quite naturally to the development of the oxymoronic formula.¹⁴⁴ The working of this process is particularly evident in Philo, who in fact evolved the notion of μέθη νηφάλιος ('sober intoxication'). The idea was early absorbed by Origen and transmitted through him to the eastern patristic writers with its implicit association with the highest spiritual states already consolidated.¹⁴⁵ It was also Origen who first forged the decisive link between μέθη νηφάλιος and the reception of the Eucharist.¹⁴⁶

The most important text to be considered in an assessment of Gregory's interpretation of the notion and his influence on its transmission occurs in the Commentary on the Canticle:

'Eat, my friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my brothers' (Cant. 5.1). For one who is familiar with the mysteries of the Gospel there will appear no difference between this text and the words used in the mystic initiation of the Apostles. For there too does He say: 'Eat and drink'. Now the exhortation to the brethren in the present text to become 'inebriated' might seem to many to go much further than the Gospel. But anyone who examines both texts carefully will find that this text is quite in harmony with that of the Gospel. For the command that is here given to the brethren in words is, in

the Gospel, transformed into deed. All intoxication causes the mind, overwhelmed with wine, to go into an ecstasy (ἔκστασιν). Hence what is urged in our text actually is realized in the Gospel through the divine food and drink. And this constantly recurs insofar as there is a continual ecstasy (ἔκστασεως) in this food and drink, that is, there is a transformation from a worse to a better condition.¹⁴⁷

The corroborative juxtapositioning of different biblical allusions has been seen to be characteristic of Gregory's method.¹⁴⁸ In this instance it affirms his notion of the fundamental relationship between the Eucharist and the spiritual ascent depicted in the Canticle, both of which culminate in ecstatic union with the divine. The extent of Gregory's dependence on the language of the mystery religions has also already been indicated,¹⁴⁹ and it is evident that, in certain respects, his doctrine of 'sober intoxication' represents a working out of this imagery to its logical if extreme conclusion.¹⁵⁰ However, the continuation of the passage cited above discloses Gregory's concern to dissociate the experience as he conceives it from profane drunkenness¹⁵¹ - which, indeed, is emphasized by the chastening epithet 'sober'. The oxymoron in fact operates by suggesting a state which resembles 'intoxication' in its intense rapture and supersession of the rational faculties; but the degenerative implications of the term are simultaneously nullified by the contradictory connotations of the adjective which defines it. It thus becomes a metaphor which is in one sense descriptive of the highest contemplative state, which in another embodies the remoteness of the state from normal patterns of experience.

The metaphor of 'watchful sleep' (ἐγρηγόρις-ὕπνος) which grew out of the notion of 'sober intoxication', also functions according to the same principle. Gregory's discussion of the phrase in his Commentary on the Canticle is particularly illuminating, since it in some way

factorizes the expression as well as establishing its precise connexion with 'sober intoxication':

Sleep usually follows drinking, and in this way the banqueters can promote their good health by allowing time for digestion. Thus after her banquet the bride, too, is overcome with sleep. But this is indeed a strange sleep and foreign to nature's custom. In natural sleep the sleeper is not wide awake, and he who is wide awake is not sleeping. Sleeping and waking (ὕπνος ... ἐγρηγόρησις) are contraries, and they succeed and follow one another. But in this case there is a strange and contradictory fusion of opposites in the same state (ἐνταῦθα δέ τις καινὴ καὶ παράδοξος μίξις τῶν ἐναντίων καὶ σύνοδος θεωρεῖται περὶ αὐτήν). For 'I sleep', she says, 'and my heart watcheth' (Cant. 5.2).

What meaning ought we to take from these words? Sleep is the image of death. All the body's sensory perception is suspended: in sleep, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch do not perform their function. In sleep bodily tension is relaxed, a man's worries are forgotten and fears are put to rest, anger is calmed; so long as sleep has control over the body, it relaxes the strain of those who are in grief and makes them unaware of any evil.¹⁵²

Gregory stresses the respects in which this condition is akin to ordinary sleep, in that the subject remains passive and receptive for the duration of the state. By combining the noun with the contradictory adjective 'watchful', however, its simultaneously cognitive quality and hence its essential dissimilarity to ordinary sleep is also emphatically communicated. Thus the oxymoronic model is again seen to be logically accountable in terms of the inherent abnormality of the doctrinal situation which it reflects.

More important, however, is the recognition that the expression 'watchful sleep' was originally coined by Gregory himself. Daniélou sketches the theological background on which Gregory undoubtedly drew for the phrase - the striking allusion to sleep in Cant. 5.2; the depiction of life as a sleep of illusion in Ecclesiastes; the early liturgical practice of keeping vigil; and the various biblical texts,

as for instance, I Thess. 5.7, in which wakefulness and sobriety are enjoined together.¹⁵³ But the crucial point here is that Gregory constructed his individual metaphor for the highest mystical awareness on the established oxymoronic model of 'μέθη νηφάλιος'. Daniélou notes that this evidences his habitual recourse to negative modes in the context of mystical theology proper:

La conception générale de la vie spirituelle comme 'veillée' est donc un thème de la littérature religieuse hellénistique; mais l'originalité de Grégoire est de montrer que cette 'veillée' présente 'un sommeil', c'est-à-dire qu'elle s'exprime avant tout en son état le plus haut comme une négation. Comme partout, c'est donc l'élément négatif, apophatique, caractéristique de la vie mystique sur lequel il insiste. Nous retrouvons toujours chez lui le même procédé: pour désigner cette expérience ineffable, il emploie toute une série d'oxymorons; il emprunte certains d'entre eux: la 'sobrievresse', νηφάλιος μέθη, ou la 'nuée lumineuse', γνόφος λαμπρός, à Philon; la vie-mort à saint Paul. Mais il en crée aussi: dans la Vie de Moïse, la σ τρύσις-κίνησις et ici l'ἐγρήγορις - ὕπνος. Ce procédé était facilité par le goût littéraire de l'époque pour les oxymorons. Mais ici, comme pour le symbolisme, Grégoire utilise des procédés littéraires pour exprimer des expériences spirituelles.¹⁵⁴

It is also significant, as Daniélou suggests at the end of this paragraph, that Gregory's linguistic creativity in respect of the oxymoron, as in the case of his negative terminology, operated largely upon a groundwork of received formulae - formulae which were, moreover, already implicitly associated with the ecstatic state of mystic union.

It is possible, therefore, to define Gregory's linguistic achievement as an important milestone in the consolidation and development of a technical vocabulary and a fund of verbal models specifically associated with mystical theology. He was, moreover, as Lewy emphasizes, a key figure in the transmission of this mystical language to the subsequent tradition of contemplative writing:

Gregor wurde in der späteren Ostkirche höchste Autorität seine

Abendmahllehre also die offizielle anerkannt und die Homilien zum Hohenlied mit ihrer Beschreibung des mystischen Aufstiegs der Seele zu Gott viel gelesen und nachgeahmt. Damit geht auch das philonische Oxymoron in den allgemeinen Sprachgebrauch der späteren Zeit über¹⁵⁵

In order to determine the character of the language which Gregory evolved, it is, however, essential to recognize a distinctive quality of the oxymoron as he employed it - namely, that in spite of its negative construction, it is akin to the apophatic elements in his vocabulary in conveying an intensely positive sense of the nature of contemplative union. This is in some respects entirely consistent with its function, since it is the accountability of the state in rational terms and hence its expressibility which is intrinsically problematic and not its existence. Yet it might be argued that, in Gregory's prose, the disparate elements of his paradoxical phraseology are somehow compounded to embody a higher concentration of meaning which, by implication, is powerfully affirmative. The dynamic character of Gregory's language, its compression and reconciliation of opposing meanings within a single word or phrase, has a firm theological basis in Gregory's insistence that the ultimate contemplative experience is one of progressive transformation into Christ through an ecstatic impulse of love.¹⁵⁶ The impact of the language thus corresponds precisely with the religious situation which it articulates. However, as Daniélou demonstrates, the contradictory components of Gregory's terminology are equally emblematic of the duality which is essential to Christian theology:

Si nous cherchons la dernière explication de cette situation spirituelle de l'âme, il nous paraît qu'elle a son dernier fondement dans la double relation qu'elle a à Dieu, sous son double aspect d'ὄνσις imparticipable et de δύναμις participable. La lumière et la ténèbre, le repos et le mouvement, la sobriété et l'ivresse sont moins deux moments successifs que deux aspects complémentaires. L'un, lumière, repos, correspond à la réalité de la participation; l'autre correspond à la transcendance

infinie de l'essence. L'état mystique dans sa réalité ineffable est précisément d'être la synthèse de ces deux éléments apparemment inconciliables. La génie de Grégoire est de n'avoir pas sacrifié l'un à l'autre, de n'avoir pas abandonné la réalité de la participation à la manière des mystiques du vide, un Eckhardt par exemple; ni non plus d'avoir minimisé la transcendance, comme le fait Origène. D'où la difficulté de le ranger dans une catégorie. Il est à la fois le plus exigeant dans l'ordre du dépouillement et le plus suave dans celui du 'goût de Dieu'.

Et précisément l'état qui correspond à cette dualité d'élément, qui est à la fois possession et sortie, c'est ce qu'il cherche à décrire par cette 'épectase' étrange, qu'on ne trouve que chez lui. Le mot par sa composition même se prête à exprimer le double élément. Il est, d'une part, possession, 'ἐπι'; il y a saisi réelle de quelque chose et intériorité de Dieu dans l'âme. Il est d'autre part, 'ἐκ', sortie de soi, irréductibilité infinie de Dieu à l'âme, qui arrache toujours l'âme à elle-même dans l'extase de l'amour. Par là aussi se trouve dépassée l'opposition de la θεωρία et de l'ἄγασμα. Par l'intelligence Dieu est intérieure à l'âme et y demeure, mais par l'amour elle est jetée hors d'elle vers lui. Ainsi 'Dieu vient dans l'âme et l'âme émigre en Dieu', 'la sortie de soi' et 'l'entrée en soi' sont les deux aspects indiscernables d'une réalité unique.¹⁵⁷

It is this sense that God is simultaneously knowable in terms of His activity towards man - witnessed in the creation and in the incarnation of Christ - and transcendent in His Essence, which in the first instance makes epectasis the only possible mode of apprehending Him and hence, on a linguistic level, determines the radically paradoxical character of Gregory's writing. In larger terms, moreover, it sanctions the inclusion of positive and negative terminologies alike in the religious situation and, indeed, dictates their mutual dependence.¹⁵⁸

The distinctive characteristic of Gregory's work, therefore, seems to be his insistence on the impossibility of finally differentiating positive and negative doctrines and designating a terminology peculiar to each.¹⁵⁹ It has, in fact, repeatedly emerged from this discussion of Gregory's mystical language that his apophatic vocabulary is at the same time inherently positive in its implications. Yet clearly the potential existed in Gregory's work for the formal demarcation of the

negative and affirmative ways which was undertaken by Ps.-Dionysius in the De Mystica Theologia and the De Divinis Nominibus. It contained, too, the potential for development into two distinct schools of mystical theology, as Daniélou suggests in his discussion of the doctrine of the spiritual senses,

On pourrait citer des textes capitaux de saint Augustin, de saint Bernard, de saint Bonaventure, de sainte Thérèse. Peut-être toutefois cette tradition représente-t-elle une école qui n'est pas celle de Denys l'Aréopagite, de Tauler, de Saint Jean de la Croix. La première insiste sur le goût de Dieu, la seconde sur son inaccessibilité. L'importance de Grégoire de Nysse est ici que l'une et l'autre tendances sont représentées, qu'il est aussi bien le précurseur de saint Bernard - et auparavant de Diadoque - par sa doctrine de la suavité divine, que de Jean de la Croix - et auparavant de Denys - par sa théologie de la ténèbre. En réalité il ne faudrait pas forcer l'opposition: les deux courants représentent, en effet, deux aspects essentiels de la mystique. D'une part elle est ténèbre pour l'esprit, mais par ailleurs elle comporte une connaissance de Dieu d'ordre existentiel qui est précisément ce que cherche à exprimer la doctrine des sens spirituels.¹⁶⁰

It seems, indeed, that subsequent mystical tradition fragmented the synthesis which was at the centre of Gregory's theology, and may in consequence be supposed to have in some sense tempered the force of the terminology which was originally dependent on this cohesion.

III. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, Gregory's linguistic achievement may be said to lie in his evolution of a specifically mystical terminology, which drew on a complex background of scriptural and non-Christian writings and rechannelled the traditional implications of their language to express his innovatory theology. He thus perpetuated both a distinctive vocabulary for mystical theology and also the use of linguistic formulae inherently evocative of the nature of contemplative union which served later religious writers as models for their own articulation of the experience. Gregory's is above all an exploratory language, but one

which is nevertheless firmly located in theology and which possesses, moreover, a power and immediacy which consistently intimate its close association with its spiritual and literary background as well as its relationship to the individual experience of mystic union.

Certain problems inherent in such an adaptation of language have, however, become apparent in the course of this chapter. The extent to which it depends on the reader for proper understanding of its meaning, for example, accentuates its vulnerability and instability as a medium. Similarly, the application of a common language in diverse senses to diverse categories of the mystic ascent necessarily entails difficulties of interpretation for the reader. Thus the concept of 'darkness' variously denotes the final stage of contemplative union and the blind and ignorant condition of the unregenerate soul;¹⁶¹ "sleep" conveys metaphorically both the highest spiritual state and the earthly delusions which impede the soul at the beginning of its ascent; in different contexts the "spouse" is both Christ, with whom the soul seeks to be united, and the physical senses which must be repudiated before the soul is able to make progress towards perfection.¹⁶² It is undoubtedly arguable that the meaning of the words is amply defined by their context, that their very fluidity is a major source of their immense evocative power, and that it is in any case unreasonable to demand precise logical accountability of theological language. Certainly the innate biblical resonances of the words and the association of the distinct connotations of a single image with different stages of the ascent effectively articulate a sense of the essential unity of the process. Yet there seems to be no constant or objective frame of reference for interpreting Gregory's language, and hence the question of its precision as a means of communicating his mystical theology lacks

an entirely satisfactory solution.

A further facet of this problem is aired by Daniélou in his discussion of Gregory's use of images of sleep and wounding:

Cette interprétation est évidemment parfois délicate. Dans quelle mesure telle expression recouvre-t-elle une expérience mystique proprement dite? Dans quelle mesure sommes-nous en présence d'un emploi symbolique? Faut-il entendre 'le sommeil' dont nous parle Grégoire d'une 'suspension des sens' ou seulement d'un recueillement profond de l'âme en Dieu? Nous sommes loin ici des précisions psychologiques de certains mystiques ultérieures - et dans une mystique qui garde - et c'est son prix - une orientation d'abord théologique. Reste avec cela qu'elle fait entendre un accent expérimental qui me paraît difficilement pouvoir être contesté et qui donne le droit d'accorder leurs pleines significations aux expressions que nous rencontrons.¹⁶³

It must indeed be acknowledged that while the extraordinarily composite nature of Gregory's terminology is responsible for its impressive dynamism, it is also in a pejorative sense productive of a disturbing insecurity in the relationship between the writer and his audience. It seems impossible to determine with complete confidence the extent to which Gregory's mystical language evokes the actual experience of union with the divine, or whether it is in fact intended to have no reference beyond the biblical context from which it originates. There is thus a radical ambiguity about the terms in which Gregory's language should be interpreted and, as a direct result of this, about the nature of the response which is demanded from the reader.

The problems thus outlined are important ones; and in the final analysis, it must be acknowledged that Gregory transmitted to later tradition a language as well as a theology which were in diverse respects at once embryonic and highly developed, and therefore susceptible of widely differing interpretations.

CHAPTER II

PSEUDO - DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE: THE FORMALIZATION OF NEGATIVE THEOLOGY AND THE FOUNDATION OF A CHRISTIAN MYSTICAL TRADITION

I. Significance in the history of mystical theology

It has been suggested that the basis of a mystical theology and allied terminology which assimilated material from Christian and platonist sources had been evolved by St. Gregory of Nyssa, and the likelihood that Ps.-Dionysius was directly influenced by Gregory's work has been urged convincingly by various scholars. The most insistent advocate of this view is Walter Völker, whose book Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita¹ has sometimes been taken to task by other scholars for its extremism in putting the case for Gregory's impact on Dionysian thought: Stephen Gersh, for example, has demonstrated that Völker overworks the argument for Cappadocian influence at the expense of the evidence for the influence of pagan neoplatonism,² though he is representative of modern scholars who have concentrated on the pagan neoplatonist aspect of the background to the Dionysian Corpus in conceding the soundness of Völker's basic proposition. It is, indeed, clear, whatever the extent of Gregory's influence on Ps.-Dionysius at first hand, that both authors worked with some of the same Christian and platonist sources. It may be said that Ps.-Dionysius' definition of mystical theology developed and systematized the concept which Gregory evolved, but it is equally apparent that Ps.-Dionysius' formulation of the theory of negative theology is far from being merely derivative, and that it reflects his personal resolution of the Christian/platonist dilemma which continued to preoccupy the eastern church during the early centuries of its foundation.

The issue of the precise philosophical and theological background of the Dionysian Corpus is bound up with the still unanswered questions as to the identity of the author and the date of his works. Scholars have variously assigned them to the late fourth, fifth and early sixth centuries, and supported their datings by attempting to establish Ps.-Dionysius' position relative to the ideological controversies which dominated particular periods during this broad epoch. The consensus of recent studies in this field seems to be that Ps.-Dionysius was probably writing in the late fifth or early sixth century: René Roques favours the later of these dates - his thorough and useful review of the relevant general evidence and critical opinion on this point is published in Structures Théologiques. De la Gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor³ - while Gersh concludes that Ps.-Dionysius probably studied at the Academy during the late fifth or early sixth century.⁴ Gersh reaffirms here the importance of Hugo Koch's work, Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen,⁵ though he recognizes that it is as partisan in its association of the Dionysian Corpus with neoplatonic tradition, and in attesting its particular affinities with Proclus, as Völker in pressing the Christian affiliations of the texts.⁶ Gersh's dating, he maintains, is consistent with Ps.-Dionysius' use of ideas which also occur in Proclus and Damascius.

Gersh represents Ps.-Dionysius as "a genuine Christian philosopher" who thoroughly transformed paganism, realizing the need to make it accord with the newer doctrine of Christianity.⁷ The present discussion supports this view, though it will be necessary to consider some of the areas of Dionysian theology whose Christian orthodoxy is open to doubt in greater detail. The extent of Ps.-Dionysius' commitment

to the Christian faith has been much debated, and the issue is complicated by the compression and allusive method of his work, and notably, in the case of the De Mystica Theologia, by the absence of any reference to Christ. Such circumstances have induced some scholars to regard his Christianity as merely superficial: Anders Nygren, for example, holds that, "the fundamental neoplatonism is but scantily covered with an exceedingly thin Christian veneer"⁸ Gersh's view, however, has been anticipated by other scholars, who have recognized in Ps.-Dionysius' use of neoplatonist structures and terminology a means of challenging pagan philosophy on its own ground. The point is made by Ceslas Pera, O.P., in his article "Denys le Mystique et la ΘΕΟΜΑΧΙΑ".⁹ Endre von Ivanka, in his article "La Signification Historique du Corpus Areopageticum", has also argued that Ps.-Dionysius adopted the hierarchic, triadic structure of neoplatonism in order to subject it to the Christian scheme:

... la situation hiérarchique elle-même, dans cette succession de degrés d'actes et d'états illuminatifs, ne signifie nullement une position supérieure ou inférieure dans l'approche de Dieu, puisque le rang inférieur, tout comme le supérieur, est immédiatement soumis à l'influx divin, et puisqu'il est également donné à chaque degré de réaliser ce qui est la fin de tous les ordres hiérarchiques: le parfait amour de Dieu et la parfaite coopération à son oeuvre. La succession graduelle de la communication du divin, conçue par le néoplatonisme de telle sorte que le divin va se dégradant et se diminuant de degré en degré est devenu chez Denys une multiplicité des formes de la participation immédiate au divin, participation qui demeure entière et parfaite à chaque degré, quoique suivant la nature propre de chacun.¹⁰

Gersh follows this line of argument when he locates Ps.-Dionysius within a tradition culminating in Erigena's philosophy, which transformed "the world-view in which God relates to man through a hierarchy of intermediate causes into one in which there is a more direct rapport"¹¹ He also emphasizes Ps.-Dionysius' modification of platonist principles with regard to the relationship of the negative and affirmative modes:

... whereas the traditional method of exegesis had been to apply the first hypothesis (negative predicates of the One) to the First Principle and the second hypothesis (affirmative predicates) to a succession of principles consequent upon the One, Ps.-Dionysius engineers a complete transformation by applying both hypotheses (negative and affirmative) to the Christian God. The pagan Neoplatonic world-picture is thus left intact by applying the first hypothesis to God who thereby transcends all the characteristics denied, but the pagan scheme is transformed by applying the second hypothesis to God, for he is now declared to possess all the characteristics affirmed.¹²

The implications of this realignment of traditional concepts for the negative and affirmative ways of contemplation are elaborately worked out, as will be shown, in Ps.-Dionysius' principal treatises, the De Mystica Theologia and the De Divinis Nominibus.

By taking as a pseudonym the name of a convert of St. Paul, moreover, Ps.-Dionysius seems to have allied himself formally with the Christian tradition of mystical theology. J. Vanneste, S.J., has suggested in his book, Le Mystère de Dieu. Essai sur la Structure Rationnelle de la Doctrine Mystique du Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, that the fiction has to do with St. Paul's reference to the altar in Athens dedicated "To an unknown God" (ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ: Acts 17.23): Ps.-Dionysius, that is, in accordance with an accepted literary practice of his day, attached his personal conviction of God's unknowability - the idea which dominates his theology - to a higher authority, and wrote as the recipient and expositor of apostolic wisdom.¹³ It was a fortunate choice of pseudonym. It ensured that the Dionysian Corpus was received with something of the reverence which was accorded to the divinely inspired writings of the apostles, and that its striking affinities with neoplatonism and the mystery religions were not allowed to disturb the securely Christian interpretation of the texts. The fiction persisted even down to the Middle Ages: the translator and commentator Sarracenus alludes to the apostolic status of the author of the Corpus

in the prologue to his commentary on the De Coelesti Hierarchia, probably written c.1140.¹⁴ Indeed, it will be shown in the following chapter that the Corpus owed its translation into Latin to its assumed apostolic character, and that it achieved thus a widespread currency during the Middle Ages which was denied to Gregory of Nyssa's work, for example, since it was not readily available in Latin - and this despite the fact that the earlier writer's work is in many respects more congenial to medieval tastes in spirituality.¹⁵ The foundations of the Christian tradition of negative mystical theology may, therefore, have been laid by Gregory, but the medieval church received it in the form given it by Ps.-Dionysius.

The discussion of Dionysian mystical theology in the present chapter uses the analysis of Gregory's doctrine in Chapter I of this thesis as a touchstone, and prepares the ground, in its turn, for the detailed examination of specific elements of Ps.-Dionysius' mystical vocabulary and their handling by successive translators of the Corpus in Chapter III. It is largely confined, for reasons of space, to the major works of the Corpus, the De Divinis Nominibus and the De Mystica Theologia. The same practice has been adopted with regard to quotations as in the preceding chapter.¹⁶

II. Mystical Theology

The character of Dionysian mystical theology cannot be established except with reference to the theological scheme which underlies the Greek Corpus as a whole. As Ps.-Dionysius himself suggests in Ch.III of the De Mystica Theologia, his formulation of the principles of ascent to God by way of negation in this work both complements and depends upon his exposition of affirmative theology in the De Divinis Nominibus.

The negative and affirmative ways are interdependent: both, moreover, are conditional upon the fact of divine transcendence, and their perfection consists, therefore, in a properly mystical awareness of God which supersedes all discursive forms of knowledge. Ps.-Dionysius insists on this point in the first chapter of the De Mystica Theologia:

Thus while it possesses all the positive attributes of the universe (πάσας τὰς τῶν ὄντων τιθέναι καὶ καταφάσκειν θέσεις) (being the universal Cause), yet in a stricter sense it does not possess them (πάσας αὐτάς κυριώτερον ἀποφάσκειν), since it transcends them all (ὡς ὑπὲρ πάντα ὑπερούση), wherefore there is no contradiction between affirming and denying that it has them (μὴ οἶσθαι τὰς ἀποφάσεις ἀντικειμένας εἶναι ταῖς καταφάσεσιν) inasmuch as it precedes and surpasses all deprivation, being beyond all positive and negative distinctions (ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρότερον αὐτὴν ἔπειρ τὰς στερήσεις εἶναι, τὴν ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν καὶ θέσιν).¹⁷

René Roques gives a clear account of the organization of Dionysian theology in Structures Theologiques:

... il subsiste entre théologie négative et contemplation mystique deux différences essentielles et d'ailleurs rattachées entre elles. La première est que la théologie négative reste une démarche discursive de l'intelligence, tandis que la contemplation mystique se situe au-delà du discours; la deuxième est qu'il n'y a théologie négative qu'en référence à une théologie affirmative dont elle limite et corrige les formulations. La contemplation mystique, au contraire, ne se réfère à aucune de ces démarches qu'elle suppose pourtant. Elle est pure vision immatérielle d'où les sens et l'intelligence, au sens ordinaire de ces mots, sont radicalement exclus.¹⁸

Roques' insistence here that negative theology, no less than affirmative theology, is dependent on intellectual procedures, is fundamental to an understanding of the De Mystica Theologia. It is a cryptic, highly allusive work - Vanneste notes "son extreme concision et l'ésoterisme de son vocabulaire mystique"¹⁹ - differing considerably in mode from the De Divinis Nominibus and perhaps no

longer so readily intelligible. Both texts, however, tend to the same conclusion. The De Divinis Nominibus is unequivocally an analytical text. Its purpose is summarized by Roques:

... l'object est de soumettre successivement à la double dialectique de l'affirmation et de la négation les attributs intelligibles de Dieu.²⁰

Vanneste makes the further point that Ps.-Dionysius' attempt to verify and establish the logical status of epithets applied to God is conducted within the framework of neoplatonic cosmology -

le pseudo-Denys écrivait pour des contemporains, qui n'ignoraient pas la philosophie néoplatonicienne: ils devaient connaître la structure du monde, émanant de Dieu que celle-ci proposait et ce qu'elle disait des relations des êtres avec ce Principe transcendantement - Un. Pour sa dialectique d'une connaissance de Dieu, l'auteur assume ces êtres, aussi bien du monde sensible que du monde intelligible, comme autant d'attributs. Suivant le mouvement diffusif de l'émanation divine, il affirme successivement ces attributs, en les ordonnant dans une vaste structure. Noms divins qui reflètent les idées néoplatoniciennes, symboles scripturaires qui contiennent un sens spirituel: ce sera le domaine où opèrent l'intelligence et la raison à l'aide de l'affirmation -

but he goes on to reaffirm that Ps.-Dionysius' presumption of divine transcendence not only circumscribes the sense of all positive terminology which postulates anything of God, but also implicitly undermines the affirmative way of contemplation to which it is closely allied:

Comme l'analyse des Noms divins le démontrera, le pseudo-Denys témoigne d'une méfiance croissante envers ce mode de connaissance. Pour atteindre le Transcendant, il n'y a que 'ce non-voir et ce non-connaître, qui est, en toute vérité, un voir et connaître et chanter ..., dans un hymne, le Suressentiel par la négation abstractive de tous les êtres' (M.T.2).²¹

The logical corollary of the fact of divine transcendence, that is, is that the soul which aspires to unitive knowledge of God is committed

to an approach whereby finite concepts are progressively repudiated - "la négation abstractive de tous les êtres" (τῆς πάντων τῶν ὄντων ἀφαιρέσεως (580)). Ps.-Dionysius' term for this process is aphairesis (ἀφαιρέσις). In the way of aphairesis, the soul proceeds by negation until it achieves agnosia (ἀγνοσία), the state of unknowing or mystical contemplation in which the soul is prepared to encounter God.²² The method of aphairesis is formally described in the De Mystica Theologia.

Vanneste's account of the De Mystica Theologia merits quoting at length, since it identifies the essential characteristics of Ps.-Dionysius' theory of aphairesis and thus fixes the precise theological context in which Dionysian mystical language operates:

En trois chapitres, l'auteur nous introduit progressivement dans les secrets de sa méthode, selon un procédé qui ressemble à une initiation aux mystères. Il exige, comme condition préalable à la réalisation de l'union au Transcendant, l'abandon de toute connaissance des sens et de l'intelligence. Symbolisée par un épisode de l'ascension de Moïse au Sinaï, la nécessité de ce renoncement est inculquée à nouveau parce que, au niveau des intelligibles, 'on ne voit pas encore Dieu'.

De cet abandon, qui ne vise que la connaissance de Dieu par affirmations, émerge l'aphairesis. Elle est une opération logique de négations successives de tous les attributs divins, qui nous est expliquée à l'aide de la comparaison plotinienne des sculpteurs. Il est caractéristique, ajoute l'auteur, que le mouvement des négations procède à l'inverse de celui des affirmations. Mais l'explication qu'il nous donne de ce phénomène ne dépasse guère les limites de la dialectique.

Livrant enfin toute sa pensée, Denys précise la technique d'une théologie négative: à base de négations successives et ordonnées selon la structure du cosmos néoplatonicien, elle vise un terme où doit se réaliser l'union mystérieuse au Transcendant par un non-connaître.

En ce premier moment, le pseudo-Denys n'en appelle pas à une expérience personnelle de connaissance mystique: tout au plus a-t-on rencontré une affirmation radicale de l'absolue transcendance de Dieu. Le récit de l'expérience mystique de Moïse - mis à part ce que nous réserve l'étude de la ténèbre - semble n'avoir servi qu'à introduire la négation abstractive en soulignant la condition précaire de la connaissance affirmative de l'intelligence. D'un niveau moral, où s'opère une purification par le renoncement au monde et au mal, il n'est guère ici question: l'allusion à la purification de Moïse est trop faible pour constituer un point de doctrine. Il n'y a,

en somme, que cet enchaînement de négations, évoluant au niveau de la connaissance, et qui, dans un élan vers la négation totale, pousse l'intelligence vers l'inconnaissance.²³

The substance of Vanneste's argument is that Ps.-Dionysius' approach to mystical religion is that of a logician rather than a metaphysician or practising mystic. Apharesis is defined as a technique of logical progression whereby sensible and intelligible phenomena are successively negated: its logical term is the condition of unknowing (agnosia), when the soul has finally abandoned natural modes of knowledge according to the senses or intellect. At this point, however, the soul is impelled by the fact of God's transcendence to pass beyond itself and enter through ecstasy into a state of union (ένωσις, henosis (568)). The culmination of the mystic way is described in De Mystica Theologia Ch.I:

... His incomprehensible presence (ἡ ὑπὲρ πάσαν ἐπίνοιαν αὐτοῦ παρουσία)... plunges the true initiate into the Darkness of Unknowing (ἔισ τὸν γνόφον τῆς ἀγνωσίας) wherein he renounces all the apprehensions of his understanding (καθ' ὃν ἀπομυεῖ πάσας τὰς γνωστικὰς ἀντιλήψεις) and is enwrapped in that which is wholly intangible (ἀναφειῖ) and invisible (ἀοράτω), belonging wholly to Him that is beyond all things (πᾶς ὄν τοῦ πάντων ἐπέκεινα) and to none else (whether himself or another), and being through the passive stillness of all his reasoning powers (τῷ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγνώστῳ τῆς πάσης γνώσεως ἀνενεργησίᾳ) united by his highest faculty to Him that is wholly Unknowable (κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον ἐνούμενος ... τῷ μηδὲν γινώσκειν), of whom thus by a rejection of all knowledge he possesses a knowledge, that exceeds all his understanding (τῷ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγνώστῳ ... ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσκων).²⁴

Ps.-Dionysius insists on the cognitive nature of this union - but the faculty of unitive knowledge transcends discursive modes of knowledge. Stephen Gersh has noted parallels between Ps.-Dionysius' concept of the unitive faculty and the notion of knowledge in the "flower of the intellect" (ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ), the intellect transcending itself, which was a development of later neoplatonist thought, expounded by Proclus in his Commentary on the Chaldaean Philosophy.²⁵ Vanneste defines the

conditions of unitive knowledge in the De Mystica Theologia:

Le troisième moment, l'union à Dieu (ένωσις προς θεόν) couronne le mouvement de la négation abstractive. Le non-connaître, en effet, est une 'connaissance au-delà de l'intelligence' au moyen de cette faculté que Denys, employant à nouveau le terme polyvalent de hénôsis, a désignée comme 'une unité au-delà de l'intelligence'. Il s'ensuit que l'intelligence, pour connaître l'Inconnaissable, pour atteindre l'Un transcendant, doit 'sortir de soi' en dépassant son mode habituel de procéder par les affirmations: c'est là ce que la théologie mystique appelle extase.

Ainsi, la force qui jette l'intelligence dans l'au-delà du Transcendant inconnaissable est le mouvement même de la négation abstractive vers son terme: c'est le dynamisme de l'inconnaissance et non l'amour qui fait arriver l'intelligence par son 'unité' éminente à l'En-soi de Dieu. La logique même de la démarche mystique dionysienne impose cette conception et l'enseignement des Noms divins sur l'éros la confirme entièrement.²⁶

The significance of έρωσ ('eros') in Dionysian theology will be considered below.²⁷ The De Mystica Theologia necessarily stops short of dealing with the unitive experience itself; its scope is limited to the preparatory phases of the mystic way which are properly amenable to intellectual enquiry, and the structure of the text is correspondingly logical and coherent. As in the case of the De Divinis Nominibus, the rational accountability of Christian theology is established against a background of neoplatonic cosmology, but the two texts work in contrary directions: the tendency of affirmative theology is to become dissipated in a multiplicity of symbols, whereas in negative theology, the De Mystica Theologia insists, the soul concentrates its entire desire on the divine essence and seeks, through union with God, to transcend all distinction between itself and the object of its desire.

Vanneste's description of the De Mystica Theologia confirms what seems to be Ps.-Dionysius' own estimate of the object of his work.

The 'Hierotheus' to whom he refers as his mentor and fellow disciple of St. Paul in De Divinis Nominibus III.2 may be a fictitious figure - part of the writer's attempt to authenticate his claim to discourse with the authority of a convert of the apostle. Nevertheless, just as the assumption of a pseudonym seems intended to reaffirm the author's position in respect of Christian tradition, so the submission that his treatises expound the lofty and esoteric teachings of Hierotheus for the benefit of the newly-initiated accurately represents his sense of their character and function. His suggestion that he shares the responsibility of all Hierotheus' pupils to subject the more advanced theology to the kind of rational investigation which will make it accessible to the intellect of novices in Christian doctrine points to the fact that the purpose of the Dionysian Corpus is fundamentally analytical and that the treatises are not, in the usual sense, experiential. The term 'experiential', as Vanneste has indicated, applies to the Corpus only in a limited and very specialized sense:

le seule expérience du pseudo-Denys, une expérience de teneur métaphysique: l'intuition profonde de la transcendance et de l'incognoscibilité de Dieu.²⁸

The mode of the Dionysian Corpus, then, is essentially philosophic, but within the framework it observes, its Christian orthodoxy seems assured. Nevertheless, Ps.-Dionysius' rationalistic approach to mystical and revealed religion undoubtedly offers significant differences in interpretation or shifts in emphasis from the received Christian attitude. In considering the nature of evil in De Divinis Nominibus IV. 18-35, for example, he resolves the issue in terms of 'being' and 'non-being' - developing, as Stephen Gersh has shown, Plato's argument in the Sophista that the concept of 'non-being' is not meaningless but

denotes 'otherness'.²⁹ The principle is also fundamental to Ps.-Dionysius' theory of aphairesis, the technique of attaining union with the transcendent God by way of negation.³⁰ In establishing it here, however, Ps.-Dionysius neither takes account of the Christian notion of sin nor insists on distinctions between moral and intellectual forms of error. Moral purgation is thus of correspondingly little importance in Dionysian mystical theology, and the contrast with Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine, in this respect, is marked.³¹ Equally, while it has already been noted that Ps.-Dionysius uses the platonist emanatory theory of the universe to reaffirm the Christian concept of a beneficent and gracious God and to assert the possibility of immediate union between the soul and God against the platonist principle of hierarchic ascent to knowledge of the One,³² the idea of God as 'Father', which is central to the Christian religion has no real force in the Dionysian Corpus.³³ Gersh comments on a related difficulty with regard to Ps.-Dionysius' use of ἔκστασις ('ecstasy') and φωτοδοσιά ('light bestowal') as emanation metaphors: he registers uncertainty as to whether they are intended to convey an automatic process or whether they allow for the intervention of the divine will.³⁴ The difficulty is illustrated by passages such as the following from De Divinis Nominibus IV:

Now let us consider the name of 'Good' (ἀγαθοῦ) which the Sacred Writers apply to the Supra-Divine Godhead in a transcendent manner, calling the Supreme Divine existence itself 'Goodness' (as it seems to me) in a sense that separates it from the whole creation, and meaning, by this term, to indicate that the Good, under the form of Being, extends its goodness by the very fact of its existence unto all things (ἐκτείνει περὶ πάντας τὴν τῆς ἀγαθότητος ἀίγλην φυσικῶς ἐν τῷ εἶναι ἀγαθόν). For as our sun, through no choice or deliberation; but by the very fact of its existence (οὐκ ἄλλο τι ὄν), gives light (φωτίζει) to all those things which have any inherent power of sharing its illumination, even so the Good (which is above the sun, as the transcendent archetype by the very mode of its existence is above its faded image) sends forth upon all things

according to their receptive powers the rays of its undivided Goodness (καὶ φωτίζει φυσικῶς ἐν τῷ εἶναι φῶς πάντα τὰ δυνάμενα μετέχειν αὐτοῦ).³⁵

Similarly, the role of Christ as intermediary between God and man is maintained with logical precision and scrupulous orthodoxy in the Dionysian Corpus - Ps.-Dionysius claims to be citing the apostolic convert Hierotheus as his authority when he defines Christ's place in the scheme of creation in De Divinis Nominibus II. 10 - but the devotional fervour and sense of the personal relationship between man and Christ which features prominently in much Christian literature and has been shown to give warmth and lyricism to Gregory of Nyssa's theology and prose style is entirely alien to Ps.-Dionysius' treatment of the subject.³⁶

Eros and Agape

One of the most contentious points of Dionysian theology, in respect of its relative affinities with platonist and Christian tradition has been the concept of love - the significance of the terms which Ps.-Dionysius applies to it and the role it fulfils in the Dionysian scheme. The focus of the debate is De Divinis Nominibus IV. 10-17. In this section of the work, Ps.-Dionysius considers ἔρως ('eros'), as well as the biblical notion of ἀγάπη ('agape'), as appropriate attributes of God. His defensiveness, even uneasiness, in putting the case for ascribing eros to God, and his insistence on the pure connotations of the term, suggest that he recognized that its association with platonism and its connexion with sensual love might cast far-reaching doubts on his imputation of eros to the Christian God:

Let us not, therefore, shrink from this title of 'Yearning' (ἔρωτος), nor be perturbed and affrighted by aught that any man may say about it. For methinks the Sacred Writers regard the titles 'Love' (ἀγάπης) and 'Yearning' (ἔρωτος) as of one meaning; but preferred, when speaking of Yearning in a heavenly sense (τὴν τοῦ ἔρωτος θεωνυμίαν), to qualify it with the word 'real'³⁷ because of the inconvenient pre-notion of such men. For whereas the title of 'Real Yearning' is employed not merely by ourselves but even by the Scriptures, mankind (not grasping the unity (ἕνοεδὲς) intended when Yearning is ascribed to God (τῆς ἐρωτικῆς θεωνυμίας), fell by their own propensity into the notion of a partial (διηρημένον), physical (σωματοπρεπῆ) and divided (μεριστὸν) quality, which is not true Yearning (ἀληθὴς ἔρως) but a vain image of Real Yearning (τοῦ θεοῦ ἔρωτος) or rather a lapse therefrom. For mankind at large cannot grasp the simplicity of the one Divine Yearning (τὸ ἐνιαῖον τοῦ θεοῦ ἔρωτος), hence, because of the offence it gives to most men, it is used concerning the Divine Wisdom to lead and raise them up to the knowledge of the Real Yearning (τὴν τοῦ ὄντως ἔρωτος γνῶσιν) until they are set free from all offence thereat ... To those who listen aright to Holy Scripture, the word 'Love' (ἀγάπης) is used by the Sacred Writers in Divine Revelation with the same meaning as the word 'Yearning' (ἔρωτος).³⁸

Ps.-Dionysius' argument that eros and agape are synonymous as terms for divine love is intended, in the view of Anders Nygren, to oust the biblical concept of agape and reassert the validity of the neoplatonist principle of eros on Christian ground.³⁹ Gabriel Horn, on the other hand, suggests in his article, "Amour et extase d'après Denys l'Aréopagite",⁴⁰ that Ps.-Dionysius had to deal with a much weakened concept of agape, and that he compensated for this by pressing into service the more forceful notion of eros as a term for divine love, whilst, at the same time, rejecting the degenerative connotations which had accrued to the word eros. Later scholars, however, have given a more satisfactory account of Ps.-Dionysius' contention that eros and agape are equivalent terms. John M. Rist, in "A note on Eros and Agape in Pseudo-Dionysius",⁴¹ has demonstrated that the two words had already become synonymous as a result of developments in neoplatonist thought during the fourth century: eros, he notes, had accumulated some suggestion of the kind of beneficent, descending force of love usually signified by agape. Eros and agape, then, are

genuine synonyms for Ps.-Dionysius - though as Rist explains, he is understandably guarded about his use of eros in a Christian context:

Since, however, most of his contemporaries thought of Eros as a cosmic power, and since Dionysius is always writing what can be called 'cosmic theology', it is natural that he should talk more about Eros than about Agape. Hence he has to justify its omission from the New Testament and easy justification is to hand. There is a heavenly Eros and an earthly, and it is dangerous to talk of Eros in the presence of the uninitiated. Such language can very easily be misinterpreted; and it is likely that Dionysius has in mind that many of the readers of Scripture would be converts from paganism and thus easily misled about Eros.⁴²

The connotations of eros, in fact, correspond precisely with Ps.-Dionysius' concept of the operation of divine power in creating and sustaining the universe. Eros is essentially ecstatic, and the force of divine eros (τοῦ θεοῦ ἔρωτος), Ps.-Dionysius suggests, creates spontaneously by the fact of its overflowing from God: God is, "through the excessive yearning of his goodness, transported outside of Himself (δι' ὑπερβολὴν ἀγαθοτήτος ἔξω ἑαυτοῦ γίνεται)",⁴³ though His nature remains undiminished by the progression. While it is true, therefore, that the difficulty of estimating the significance of the will in Ps.-Dionysius' theory of divine ecstasy gives rise to legitimate doubts as to the strict Christian orthodoxy of the Corpus, it is nevertheless certain that Ps.-Dionysius recasts the platonist concept of a universe based on emanation within the framework of Christian cosmology, and insists that the cohesive principle of creation is love. The insistence on the role of eros in the following passage, it should be noted, is more marked than Rolt's translation allows:

To those who listen aright to Holy Scripture, the word 'Love' (ἀγάπης) is used by the Sacred Writers in Divine Revelation with the same meaning as the word 'Yearning' (ἔρωτος). It means a faculty of unifying (ἐνοποιῶν) and conjoining (συγκρατικὴν) and of producing a special commingling together

(συγκρινω̄νται δηλαδὴ τὰ πάντα ὡς ἔρῳντα) in the Beautiful (καλὸν) and Good (ἀγαθόν): a faculty which pre-exists for the sake of the Beautiful and Good, and is diffused from this Origin to this End, and holds together things of the same order by a mutual connection (ἵνα δηλονότι πρὸς ἄλληλα τὰ μὲν ὁμοταγῆ συνεχωνται ὡς ἀνὰ μέρος ἔρῳντα τε καὶ ἐρώμενα), and moves the highest to take thought (κινοῖντο καὶ ἐρῳεν) for those below and fixes the inferior in a state which seeks the highest (τὰ δὲ καταδεέστερα πρὸς τὰ ὑπέρτερα ἀγαπήτικως ἔχοιεν).⁴⁴

The corollary of imputing eros to God is, thus, that the soul responds in kind and reverts to God by passing beyond itself through love.

Ps.-Dionysius reaffirms this point in De Divinis Nominibus IV.13:

And the Divine Yearning (θεῖος ἔρως) brings ecstasy (ἐκστατικός), not allowing them that are touched thereby to belong unto themselves ...⁴⁵

But, characteristically, Ps.-Dionysius says little about the nature of the individual soul's ascent to God under the impulse of love.

The notion of eros effectively confirms Ps.-Dionysius' account of the logic of the negative way, as Vanneste suggested in the passage cited above⁴⁶ - though Stephen Gersh has noted that the theory of the soul's ascending ecstasy received greater prominence in mystical literature following Ps.-Dionysius.⁴⁷ In this respect, too, the contrast with Gregory's exposition of the Canticle, as a model for the soul's personal search for union with God, is marked. Rist identifies one of the reasons for this apparent deficiency in Ps.-Dionysius' writing:

It is first necessary to repeat that in this section of his writings⁴⁸ Dionysius is not describing an ascent to God but giving God his names. Naturally therefore an aspiring Eros does not occur and a Proclan downward-flowing Providential Eros does. It has been frequently observed, most recently by Roques (in Structures théologiques de la gnose à Richard de St. Victor (Paris, 1962), pp.121-2), that in the Mystical Theology and in his First and Fifth Letters where Dionysius is concerned with the mystical ascent to God, neither Eros nor Agape is mentioned at all. It is true, of course, that Dionysius does not thereby mean to

exclude love as the motive force in the Christian's ascent, but it is at least worthy of notice that when Dionysius actually uses these terms they are primarily descriptions of God not attributes of man.⁴⁹

They are part, indeed, of a logical account of the principles of Christian theology, and the De Mystica Theologia proceeds from this basis to explain the rationale of the way of unknowing, which is itself the logical inference from the theology of divine transcendence.⁵⁰ The narrative of Moses' experience on Sinai is subjected to much the same treatment. H.-C. Puech, in his article "La ténèbre mystique chez le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite et dans la tradition patristique", has indicated the affinities between Ps.-Dionysius' handling of the subject and Gregory of Nyssa's mystical interpretation of the Book of Exodus:

Le § 3 du ch. I de la Théologie Mystique est lui-même bâti sur un type traditionnel, dont la Vie de Moïse de Grégoire de Nysse donne le meilleur échantillon: un bref résumé du récit biblique (ἱστορία), suivi d'une θεωρία, d'une interprétation allégorico-mystique.⁵¹

The point is a valid one - the exegetical method and its conclusions relative to the theory and practice of the mystic way are fundamental to the De Mystica Theologia. They are subsumed, however, within a larger and, it has been stressed, logical rather than scriptural framework. As Vanneste has suggested in his account of the De Mystica Theologia, the Moses narrative, as symbolizing abandonment of natural modes of knowledge by way of the senses and intellect in order to achieve union with God, has the same status in the text as the symbol of ritual initiation into secret knowledge, which Ps.-Dionysius drew from the mystery religions: the procedure is enacted in chapters I-III of the text, as the disciple Timothy is tutored in the successive rejection of finite cognitive methods in order to be initiated into unknown knowledge.

There is no doubt that Dionysian mystical theology sacrifices, as a result, the personal dimension which is strongly present in Gregory's work: whatever mystical experience Ps.-Dionysius himself may have had, in his writings he treats the subject of mystical religion dispassionately as a dialectician, and he makes no appeal to the individual experience of his readers. His language, too, lacks the kind of richness and evocativeness which characterizes Gregory's mystical vocabulary by virtue of its scriptural basis. Its gain in precision, however, insofar as it refers to a rationalized scheme of theology, is considerable. Rist makes a cognate point in his final assessment of Ps.-Dionysius' achievement in objectifying the Christian doctrine of love: his rationalistic approach allowed him to accommodate the concept of eros within a coherent cosmology which reaffirms love as the unifying principle in the true Christian spirit, whereas Gregory, whose Christian orthodoxy goes unchallenged, struggled uncertainly and ultimately less convincingly, with the more intractable notion of agape, and eros remained imperfectly assimilated into his theology.⁵²

III. Mystical Vocabulary

In linguistic terms, the expository character of the Dionysian treatises has its counterpart in the author's acute attentiveness to words and meticulous concern with their precision as vehicles for theological propositions. His approach to religious language has affinities with that of Gregory of Nyssa, inasmuch as both writers recognize the linguistic repercussions of the doctrine of divine transcendence. Ps.-Dionysius states the problem cogently in the first chapter of the De Divinis Nominibus:

For even as things which are intellectually discerned (τὰ νοητὰ) cannot be comprehended or perceived (ἀληπτα) by means of those things which belong to the senses (τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς), nor simple and imageless things by means of types and images (τοῖς ἐν πλάσει, καὶ συνθέσει, καὶ τύπῳ τὰ ἀπλά καὶ ἀτύπωτα), nor the formless and intangible essence of unembodied things (τὰ ἀσχημάτιστα) by means of those which have bodily form (κατὰ σχήματα μεμορφωμένοις), by the same law of truth (λόγον) the boundless Super-Essence surpasses Essences (ὑπερέχει ὁ θεὸς, ὁ μήτε οὐσία, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν), the Super-Intellectual Unity surpasses Intelligences (μήτε νοῦς, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ νοῦν ἐνόητος), the One which is beyond thought surpasses the apprehension of thought (μὴ διαφύρων τινῶν πρὸς ἐνωσιν καὶ συνδρομὴν νοησάτω τις), and the Good which is beyond utterance surpasses the reach of words (οὐ γὰρ περὶ τοιούτων ῥὸ λόγος νᾶν).⁵³

Like Gregory, too, Ps.-Dionysius concedes that, although God is essentially beyond the scope of the human institution of language because He exceeds natural modes of cognition, scriptural language nevertheless has a unique claim to have some bearing on God in that it is held to be divinely inspired. The authoritativeness of the scriptural titles of God is, indeed, a basic premise of the De Divinis Nominibus, and Ps.-Dionysius seems also to endorse the theory of the intermediary and revelatory function of language as it had become integral to Christian theology: he writes of scriptural language,

For, if we may safely trust the wise and infallible Scriptures, Divine things are revealed unto each created spirit in proportion to its powers, and in this measure is perception granted through the workings of Divine goodness, the which in just care for our preservation divinely tempereth unto finite measure the infinitude of things which pass man's understanding (ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν μέτρῳ καὶ χωρητῶν τὴν ἀμετρίαν αὐτοῦ, ὡς ἀχώρητον, ἐξ ἀναλογίας τὸ ἀκατάληπτον τῆς περὶ θεοῦ γνώσεως ἐνταῦθα παρίσταται).⁵⁴

The idea that the true meaning of scripture is wrapped in symbolic language and accessible only to those with a proper commitment to Christian doctrine seems also to have impinged on Ps.-Dionysius' thinking. In this respect, however, the influence of the earlier mystery cults was confirmatory and perhaps dominant, and Ps.-Dionysius speaks of the hidden truths of religion as being intelligible only to

its initiates, using the specialized vocabulary of the mystery sects:

And in all other divine enlightenments which the occult tradition of our inspired teachers hath, by mystic interpretation, accordant with the Scriptures, bestowed upon us, we also have been initiated (ὅσας ἄλλας διδασκαλίας ταῖς Γραφαῖς ἀκολουθῶν ἢ τῶν διδασκάλων ἡμῶν κρυφία παράδοσις ἐν μυστηρίῳ ... ἡμῖν): apprehending these things in the present life (according to our powers) (ἀναλόγως τῇ δυνάμει τῆς ἡμετέρας νοήσεως), through the sacred veils (παραπετασμάτων) of that loving kindness which in the Scriptures (Γραφικῶν) and Hierarchical Traditions, enwrappeth spiritual truths in terms drawn from the world of sense, and super-essential truths in terms drawn from Being (ἵνα χωρηθῇ τὸ γονιτὸν καὶ ἀχώρητον ἐν ἡμῖν, αἰσθητοῖς συμβόλοις ἐχρήσατο, οἷον τισὶ πεθρικαλύμματα), clothing with shapes and forms things which are shapeless and formless, and by a variety of symbols, fashioning manifold attributes (τὰ ἀπλᾶ ἐν τῇ ποικιλίᾳ τῶν μεριστῶν συμβόλων) of the imageless and supernatural Simplicity.⁵⁵

Thus, whereas Gregory of Nyssa insists on moral purity as a prerequisite for perfect understanding of the inner meaning of scripture, purification in the moral sense has no more force in the Dionysian Corpus as a criterion for the interpretation of biblical language than Ps.-Dionysius allows it theologically as a condition for progress in the mystic way. The initiate of religion, in the Dionysian Corpus, appreciates that he is in the presence of a mystery which is to be preserved from violation by those who do not respect it - but having once accepted the principle of divine transcendence, the fact of his admission to the knowledge of this mystery is in itself no qualification for comprehension of religious literature: Ps.-Dionysius relies rather on making scriptural language intelligible from a rational standpoint and ensuring the logical accountability of his own works. His approach to scripture is, therefore, not that of an exegete in the sense that the term is applicable to Gregory. While he constantly refers to texts from the Bible in the De Divinis Nominibus, he is less concerned to extrapolate a coherent meaning from the whole than to identify the precise significance of individual titles of God as components of a verbal system for denoting religious propositions.

In view of this, and because Ps.-Dionysius is preoccupied in both the De Mystica Theologia and the De Divinis Nominibus with what can and cannot be properly affirmed of God, it is noteworthy and perhaps disturbing that the Dionysian Corpus includes very little examination of the linguistic medium itself. Linguistically as well as theologically, Ps.-Dionysius seems to have drawn heavily on tradition, adopting terminology and verbal models which were already closely associated with mystical theology, and using them independently without entering into detailed analysis of their theoretical background. His interest in language accords with the largely expository purpose of his writings in being primarily semantic, and he attaches considerable importance to the efficacy and precision of words as a means of communication - so that, he writes,

... our whole Discourse should be made clear (δῆλος ὁ λόγος γένηται), and, being free from all doubtfulness and obscurity (ἀσαφές), may (to the best of our powers) give a distinct, plain and orderly statement of the matter (σαφῶς περιορίζων).⁵⁶

Ps.-Dionysius here enlarges on his statements in relation to scriptural language and seems to impute to language in general the same intermediary and essentially interpretative function. He puts the point more forcefully later in the De Divinis Nominibus, where he strengthens his defence of the case for applying eros to God by insisting that words in themselves have no more than a symbolic status and fulfil a purely utilitarian role:

Need is there to understand that in proper truth we do but use the elements and syllables and phrases and written terms (λέξεων και γραφῶν και λόγων) as an aid to our senses (αἰσθητῶν).⁵⁷

Ps.-Dionysius seems to suggest here that the operation of language in a religious context is intrinsically metaphoric, insofar as the relationship of words to the objects they describe is necessarily oblique.

He establishes, moreover, a firm connexion between language and the perception and intellection of sense phenomena. He develops the point further in an important passage from the De Mystica Theologia: the process of aphairesis, it has been stressed, demands successive abandonment of things of the senses and intellect (τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἀπόλειπε, καὶ τὰς νοερὰς ἐνεργείας),⁵⁸ and he insists that in transcending these, the soul passes beyond the range of phenomena which are amenable to finite modes of cognition and thus to formulation in the allied medium of language:

For the more that we soar upwards the more our language becomes restricted to the compass of purely intellectual conceptions (οἱ λόγοι ταῖς συνόψεσι τῶν νοητῶν περιστέλλοντα), even as in the present instance plunging into the Darkness which is above the intellect (τὸν ὑπὲρ νοῦν εἰσδύνοντες γνόφον) we shall find ourselves reduced not merely to brevity of speech (βραχυλογία) but even to absolute dumbness both of speech and thought (ἀλογία παντελῆ καὶ ἀνοησία).⁵⁹

It is noteworthy that the passage deals with the transition from the illuminative to the unitive phase of the mystic way as they were defined in Gregory's theology; Ps.-Dionysius, however, neither emphasizes the doctrinal distinctions between these stages nor accentuates differences in the language which properly pertains to each of them - though it is hoped to show that he assimilated and made use of both. Dionysian theology is dominated by the concept of divine transcendence, and its principal movement is therefore towards unknowing: on a linguistic plane, therefore, its logical tendency is towards the "secret silence" (κρυφιομύστου σιγῆς) which the author refers to in Ch.I of the De Mystica Theologia.⁶⁰

The Dionysian Corpus is thus largely unencumbered by lengthy preparatory discussion of its medium, and Ps.-Dionysius' formulation of difficult theological propositions is as a result impressively

forthright and penetrating. On the other hand, however, Ps.-Dionysius' unwillingness to explore the theory of language is perhaps not unconnected with a fundamental insensitivity to its subtle operations. Thus, for example, his theoretical appreciation of the mediating role of language does not seem to be complemented by a practical regard for the complex relationship which is established between writer and audience by the interposition of words. The attempt to induce words to operate as symbols which exactly denote a dialectical theology means that their suggestive potential is not exploited to best advantage, and it must be doubted whether this potential may be mastered by the author to the extent that his system demands. These deficiencies are particularly apparent where Ps.-Dionysius is considering the sense in which relative terms may be applied to God: God, he writes, is not,

...beautiful in one part and foul in another (οὐδὲ κατὰ τι καὶ ἀνὰ μέρος καλόν); nor yet at one time and not at another (οὐδὲ κατὰ τινα χρόνον καλόν); nor yet beautiful in relation to one thing but not to another (κατὰ τινα δὲ οὐ οὐδὲ πρὸς τι καλόν),⁶¹

and later,

Now God is called Great in His peculiar Greatness (λέγεται καὶ μέγας κατὰ το ὑπερπλήρες αὐτοῦ καὶ μεγαλουργόν) which giveth of itself to all things that are great and is poured upon all Magnitude from outside and stretches far beyond it (ὅτι αἱ πηγαὶ τῶν δωρεῶν αὐτοῦ, παρὰ πάντων μετεχόμεναι, ἀμείωτοι εἰσι).⁶²

In the first instance, Ps.-Dionysius asserts that the adjective "beautiful" must have an absolute rather than a relative meaning when it designates God; in the second instance, he interprets the meaning of "great" as a description of God by supplying a paraphrase of its connotations. An awareness of the problems of applying relative terms to an absolute entity underlies both passages,⁶³ and the first

passage seems to imply a recognition on the part of the author that intellection and labelling are associated activities and together introduce a spatio-temporal dimension to theology, which inherently contradicts the belief that God exceeds both space and time and contains all opposites in singleness. Ps.-Dionysius, however, attempts to resolve the problem at the level of redefining meaning: he treats effects rather than causes, that is, and does not get to the root of the problem by dealing explicitly with the dualistic nature of language itself. Stephen Gersh makes an allied point:

It is one of the cardinal points of Ps.-Dionysius' doctrine that the divine effulgence is a unity which cannot be captured adequately by created things and is thus multiplied according to their modes of participation. This notion forms the basis of his approach to the nature of human cognition which he considers in various passages as operating "rationally and discursively and so to speak with composite and variable activities" (λογικῶς καὶ διεξοδικῶς καὶ οἷον συμμικτοῖς καὶ μεταβατικαῖς ἐνεργείαις) or as "wandering" (πλάνη) in comparison with the stability of divine intellection. Ps.-Dionysius does not combine these two notions to form the logical conclusion that the structure of the human mind is responsible for the fact that God himself is necessarily conceived as a manifold, but this argument is worked out explicitly by later Christian Neoplatonists.⁶⁴

These seem disturbing inadequacies in works which are concerned with the rationale of Christian theology and its verbal formulation.

Ps.-Dionysius' approach to language, therefore, may be said to be utilitarian and pragmatic, and it seems inappropriate to claim any special distinction for his use of words as being either creative or inventive in any literary sense. He has been shown to have assimilated traditional concepts with regard to the status and function of scriptural language, and similarly, in the broader context of theological language, he accepts the precept of applying perceptual terminology to God on the basis of analogy. Thus, he writes in the sixth chapter of the De Divinis Nominibus:

For the Supra-Vital and Primal Life (ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ζωὴν θείας ζωῆς καὶ ζῶσι) is the Cause of all Life, and produces and fulfils it and individualizes it (ζωοῦσι τὰ σώματα, ἐν ἡ τῆ θεία ζωῆ). And we must draw from all life the attributes we apply to it when we consider how it teems with all living things (πολλαί εἰσι ζωαί καί ὁμώνομοι αἱ καθ' ἡμᾶς, ἀλλ' οὖν ἐνοειδῶς καί κατὰ μίαν τὴν ζωτικὴν αἰτίαν προυφίστανται), and how under manifold forms it is beheld and praised in all Life and lacketh not Life or rather abounds therein, and indeed hath Very Life, and how it produces life in a Supra-Vital manner and is above all life and therefore is described by whatsoever human terms may express that Life which is ineffable (λέγειν ... τὸ ὑπερπλήρης, καθὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ἐπὶ πολλοῖς ἑτέροις παρ' αὐτῆς χέεται ἢ αὐτόζωος, καὶ ὑπερζωος, ἢ ζωοποιός, ἢ ὅπως ἄλλως ἀνθρωπικῶς ἂν ὑμῆσοι τις τὴν ἀφθεγκτον ἐκείνην καὶ θείαν ζωὴν).⁶⁵

The creative relation in which God stands towards man allows man to participate in the divine perfections and sanctions the ascription of the properties of creation to God as attributes, though He is simultaneously held to transcend them all.⁶⁶ This is the language of symbolical theology, which operates by inference and is closely associated with the illuminative way by St. Gregory of Nyssa. Ps.-Dionysius seems to concede the appropriateness of language - as having connexion with cognition through the senses and intellect - in the context of affirmative theology, the method of which is essentially discursive and which deals in revealed religion.

Affirmative Vocabulary

The use of positive terminology in relation to God in the Dionysian Corpus thus has a basis in theology. Ps.-Dionysius elaborates on this point in the fifth chapter of the De Divinis Nominibus, where he is considering Wisdom, Life, Godhead and Being as fitting titles for God. He affirms their validity, in that they are,

... Names which reveal the Providence of God (ὁ λόγος ὑμῆσαι τὰς τῆς προνοίας ἐκφαντορικὰς).⁶⁷

The names do not purport to describe the essence of God Himself, that is, but rather express the beneficent aspect of God's being which, by reason of its relationship to creation, is in some measure accessible to human perception and verbal formulation.

The Dionysian Corpus is marked by its emphasis on divine transcendence, however, and, consequently, on the incongruity of applying language to God at all. Ps.-Dionysius, like Gregory, is concerned to manipulate words, which properly embody finite concepts, to convey ontological propositions which exceed their normal scope. He insists, in the first instance, that language can only apply to God in a very specialized sense: in the second chapter of the De Divinis Nominibus, for example, he maintains that,

...if one says that Very Life lives (εἴ τις φαίη ζῆν τὴν ζωοῦσαν καὶ αὐτοζωὴν), or that Very Light is enlightened (καὶ φωτίζεσθαι τὸ αὐτόφως), he will be wrong (according to my view) unless, perchance, he were to use these terms in a different sense from the ordinary one (εἰ μὴ πού καθ' ἕτερον τρόπον) to mean that the qualities of created things pre-exist, after a superlative manner as touching their true Being in the Creative Originals (περισσῶς, καὶ οὐσιωδῶς, καὶ οὐ κατὰ μετοχὴν, πρὸ τῶν αἰτιατῶν ἐνεῖσι τὰυτα τοῖς αἰτίοις).⁶⁸

Two points seem to emerge from this passage. On the one hand, Ps.-Dionysius appears to be questioning the use of verbs in relation to God: verbs are subject to tense, and are therefore embedded in the temporal process, whereas God is held to exist outside the dimension of time. The implication is that abstract nouns, by avoiding these restrictive connotations, are a more appropriate means of expressing something of the divine. Further, the dissociation of the noun from its cognate verb - 'life' from 'live', 'light' from 'enlighten' - and the prefixing of the qualifying epithet 'Very' (αὐτο-) - αὐτοζωὴν, αὐτόφως - combine to confer a special and absolute status on the noun

when it is used to describe God. Thus, the problem which was apparent where Gregory of Nyssa proposed a similar redefinition of language in a religious context - namely that words must be assumed to have altered their function and meaning while remaining unchanged in form - is perpetuated, perhaps inevitably, in the Dionysian Corpus. Like Gregory, Ps.-Dionysius both explains the significance of nouns in relation to God by paraphrase and adopts the verbal model of noun preceded by a qualifying adjective to underline the consummate meaning which words must be assumed to possess when they refer to God: comparable examples occur in chapter five of the De Divinis Nominibus, where, in addition to 'Very Life' (αὐτοζωὴν), Ps.-Dionysius refers to 'Very Wisdom' (αὐτοσοφίαν), 'Very Being' (αὐτοεἶναι) and 'Very Similarity' (αὐτομοιότητα).⁶⁹ It is worth noting, however, that Ps.-Dionysius' attempt to enforce the perfect meaning of his vocabulary is not connected, as it is in Gregory's theology, with the spiritual purgation undertaken by the individual contemplative, but is rather integral to his design of establishing the logical accountability of religious language.

For both authors, however, descriptive terms of this kind convey more than the sense in which God consummately incorporates all finite concepts. They affirm, simultaneously, the apparently contradictory proposition of divine transcendence, in that they perfect these concepts to a degree which elevates them beyond comparison with their empirical counterparts. They reflect, in fact, the essential paradox of the divine nature, though the paradox is latent in these expressions and not, as in other elements of Dionysian vocabulary, pointedly embodied in the verbal formulae themselves.

The paradoxical implications of this positive terminology are sometimes urged more insistently, however. Ps.-Dionysius' exposition of Life as a title for God, for example, demonstrates his manipulation of verbal functions in order to achieve as accurate a representation of a theological proposition as the medium of language will allow. He begins with an account of the various connotations of the title:

Now we must celebrate Eternal Life (τῆς αἰωνίου... ζωῆς) as that whence cometh very Life and all life (αὐτοζωὴ καὶ πᾶσα ζωὴ), which also endues every kind of living creature with its appropriate meed of Life (οἰκείως ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὸν τῆς φύσεως αὐτοῦ λόγον τὸ ζῆν διασπείρεται).⁷⁰

The descriptive title "Eternal Life" embodies a doctrinal claim concerning the nature of God - that as the source of all life, He contains it in perfection and without being subject to time.⁷¹ Ps.-Dionysius goes on to explain, however, that this condition necessarily involves the transcendence of all life:

And, as, in thinking of the title 'Existent', we said that it is an Eternity of very Being, so do we now say that the Supra-Vital or Divine Life is the Vitalizer and Creator of Life. And all life and vital movement comes from the Life which is beyond all Life and beyond every Principle of all Life (Αἰωνίαν δὲ λέγει, οὐχ ὅτι τοῦ αἰῶνος μετέχει, (αὕτη γὰρ περιέχει καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας) ἀλλ' ὡσπερ λέγεται μὲν καὶ ὄν ὁ θεός, λέγεται δὲ καὶ ὑπὲρ τὸ ὄν· το μὲν, ὅτι ἐστὶν ὑπαρξίς ὑπὲρ ὑπαρξίν· τὸ δὲ, ὅτι οὐ μετέχει τοῦ εἶναι, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τὸ εἶναι ἐστὶν· οὕτω καὶ αἰώνιος ἢ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ, καὶ παλιν ὑπεραιώνιος. Αἰώνιος μὲν, διότι αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἐστὶν αἰὼν καὶ αἰδιότης· ὑπεραιώνιος δὲ, ὅτι καὶ αἰώνων οὗτός ἐστι ποιητής.⁷²

Pursuing the paradox which is implicit in these theological statements to its logical conclusion, Ps.-Dionysius develops a vocabulary to embody both elements of the paradox at once: God is described as "plusquam ens" (ὑπὲρ τὸ ὄν), "supraquam existentia" (ὑπὲρ τὸ εἶναι), "supraquam aeterna" (ὑπεραιώνιος). This last term operates in the same way as the perfecting formula discussed above (eg αὐτοζωὴν,

αὐτοεἶναι etc.) - that is, by at once affirming the applicability of a particular attribute to God in its most sublime form, and denying its appropriateness, in that God may be supposed to possess the quality to a degree exceeding human conception. The construction of the two sets of terms is identical, though the paradoxical connotations of the "ὑπερ-" vocabulary are more explicit.⁷³

Ps.-Dionysius explains the rationale of the "ὑπερ-" vocabulary more precisely in the second chapter of the De Divinis Nominibus. Rolt's translation is not sufficiently close to Migne's Greek text to merit quotation here, and has therefore been replaced by the parallel Latin text printed in the P.G.:

Nomen igitur unita, scilicet totius Deitatis, Τριναε unitatis, sicut alibi diximus, sunt supra quam bonum (τὸ ὑπεράγαθον), et caetera, quibus praepositio supra praepositur, quae vocat ablationis secundum exsuperantiam (προσλαμβανομένης τῆς ὑπὲρ προθέσεως, ἃ δὴ καὶ τῆς ὑπεροχικῆς ἀφαιρέσεως λέγει); siquidem etiam ablativum est nomen immortale et increatum, sed secundum affirmationem (ἀφαιρεματικὸν γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἀθάνατον, καὶ τὸ ἄκτιστον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἀπόφασιν). Ablativum etiam est supraquam bonum (Ἀφαιρεματικὸν καὶ τὸ ὑπεράγαθον); non enim simpliciter bonum et sapiens, sed supra haec (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀπλῶς ἀγαθὸν καὶ σοφὸν, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ταῦτα), et sine comparatione (ἀσυγκρίτως), et idcirco superlative ablationem continent (διὰ τοῦτο ὑπεροχικῶς τὴν ἀφαίρεσιν ἔχουσι), quibus adnumerantur omnia quae ad rationem causae pertinent.⁷⁴

To designate God ὑπεράγαθον ("Super-Excellent" in Rolt's translation) is to make a grammatically affirmative statement concerning the divine nature, and there is no intrinsically negative component in the construction of the word itself. The intent of the statement, however, is predominantly negative: the force of the contention that God possesses an attribute - in this case, 'excellence' - to excess, that is, is to suggest that God does not possess it in any sense that man can comprehend. The prefix ὑπερ-, therefore, as Ps.-Dionysius explains, signifies a negative of excess, and is thus

connotatively the equivalent of the explicitly negative terminology (e.g. "immortal" (ἀθάνατον), "uncreated" (ἄκτιστον)) which denies the applicability of finite concepts to God. Both function similarly within grammatically affirmative sentence structures - "God is Super-Excellent", "God is Immortal" - which are nevertheless negative in intent. Both are, in fact, methods of embodying the principle of divine transcendence linguistically, and thus represent different aspects of the negative mode which Ps.-Dionysius insists to be the logical corollary of the theology of transcendence. They are connected here with the process of aphairesis - the negative way of the soul whereby it attains the condition of unknowing which precedes its ecstatic union with God - which is itself also logically determined by the fact of divine transcendence. The ascendancy of negative over affirmative values in both cases also reasserts the fundamental principle of Dionysian theology - that the fact of divine transcendence dictates that even the affirmative way culminates in negation.

Negative Vocabulary

Ps.-Dionysius analyses the negative dialectic itself more closely in Ch.IV of the De Divinis Nominibus:

Now if the Good is above all things (ὕπερ πάντα τὰ ὄντα) (as indeed It is) Its Formless Nature produces all-form; and in It alone Not-Being is an excess of Being, and Lifelessness is an excess of Life and Its Mindless state is an excess of Wisdom (αἱ στειρήσεις ἐπὶ θεοῦ ὑπερβολαί εἰσι θέσεων δραστήριοι, ὡς τὸ ἀνείδεος, ἀνούσιος, ἄζωος, ἄνοος), and all the Attributes of the Good we express in a transcendent manner by negative images (ἐν τῷ θεῷ ὑπερουσίως ὄντι κατὰ τὴν ἀφαίρεσιν ἀπάντων... ὑπεροκικῶς νοοῦνται).⁷⁵

Here again, Ps.-Dionysius insists that divine transcendence is the controlling factor, and reaffirms that both the negative and the

affirmative ὑπερ- terminologies make precisely the same claims concerning the nature of God: as the ὑπερ- vocabulary implies negation, so the explicitly negative attributes of God denote his transcendence of finite concepts by exceeding them.

Ps.-Dionysius constructs his negative vocabulary on the verbal model already intimately associated with Christian mystical theology by Gregory of Nyssa - the negating prefix "ἀ-" is conjoined to a stem which expresses a finite concept. Further examples of the kind cited by Ps.-Dionysius in De Divinis Nominibus IV occur prominently in the De Mystica Theologia: God is here described as "the immaterial and indivisible Good" (τοῦ ἀύλου καὶ ἀμεροῦς ἀγαθοῦ),⁷⁶ as the "intangible and invisible" (ἀναφεῖ καὶ ἀοράτῳ)⁷⁷ which encompasses the soul once it has come, through aphaesis, to the condition of unknowing, and which demands that the soul should achieve unitive awareness only "through the loss of sight and knowledge" (δι' ἀβλεψίας καὶ ἀγνωσίας).⁷⁸ These examples illustrate that the negative vocabulary of the Dionysian Corpus is something more than a system of symbols to denote God's transcendence of conceptual forms: Ps.-Dionysius pursues the logic of the theology of transcendence on both the doctrinal and the linguistic levels, and also applies the negative dialectic to the mystic way (aphaesis) and to the condition of the soul which has reached the term of aphaesis and is prepared for union. It designates, therefore, both the mode of knowledge and what is known. Ps.-Dionysius emphasizes this point in the second chapter of the De Mystica Theologia:

... and may attain unto vision (ἰδεῖν) through the loss of sight and knowledge (δι' ἀβλεψίας καὶ ἀγνωσίας), and that in ceasing thus to see or to know (αὐτὸ τὸ μὴ ἰδεῖν μηδὲ γινῶναι) we may learn to know (γινῶναι) that which is beyond all

perception and understanding (τὸ ὑπὲρ θεῶν καὶ γνῶσιν)...
in order that we may attain a naked knowledge (ἀπερικαλύπτως
γνῶμεν) of that Unknowing (ἐκείνην τὴν ἀγνοσίαν).⁷⁹

Both these meanings are implicit in Gregory's use of negative terminology. Moreover, Ps.-Dionysius did not only adopt the verbal model which Gregory had connected with Christian mystical theology, but some of the specific terms - ἀοράτω and ἀγνοσία, for example - which Gregory had established as part of the technical vocabulary associated with the unitive way.⁸⁰ Ps.-Dionysius seems, therefore, in some respects to have consolidated Gregory's usage, but he clearly approached the traditional language of Christian mysticism independently and rather more as a logician than, as in Gregory's case, a theologian and exegete. He displaced the biblical orientation of Gregory's mystical terminology, and substituted an objective, logical and therefore constant framework for the interpretation of mystical discourse, closely allied to his investigation of the rationale of Christian theology, which ensured it the kind of precision and accountability which had been lacking in Gregory's works.

It is important, however, in insisting on the negative connotations of Ps.-Dionysius' vocabulary, not to underestimate its affirmative aspects.⁸¹ The goal of Dionysian theology, as the De Mystica Theologia presents it, is "knowledge" (γνῶναι) of that "Unknowing" (ἀγνοσίαν) by means of "unknowing" (ἀγνοσίας): the title "Unknowing" implicitly affirms two things concerning God - the fact of His existence, that is, and His transcendence of finite concepts - and the notion of "knowledge through unknowing" or "vision ... through ceasing thus to see" (ἰδεῖν... αὐτὸ τὸ μὴ ἰδεῖν) affirms that there is an awareness of God which consists in the abandonment of finite modes of cognition.

Ps.-Dionysius effectively proposes a new method of apprehension which is appropriate to the incomprehensibility of its object - a method whose alienation from natural processes of sensual and intellectual perception is imaged in, rather than properly described by, the paradoxical construction of the individual words and the corresponding juxtapositioning of the contradictory terms which are made to express it.

Mystical Darkness

This definition of mystical awareness necessitates a metaphoric use of language, and Ps.-Dionysius brings metaphor of a different kind to bear when he associates the condition of unknowing with darkness. He writes at the end of the first chapter of the De Mystica Theologia of,

... the Darkness of Unknowing (τὸν γνόφον τῆς ἀγνωσίας) wherein he renounces all the apprehensions of his understanding (ἀπομυεῖ πάσας τὰς γνωστικὰς ἀντιλήψεις) and is ... united by his highest faculty (κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον ἐνούμενος) to Him that is wholly Unknowable (τῷ μηδὲν γινώσκειν), of whom thus by a rejection of all knowledge (τῷ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγνώστω) he possesses a knowledge that exceeds his understanding (ὑπερ νοῦν γινώσκων).⁸²

The conjunction of darkness and unknowing was, of course, traditional, and derives from the Exodus account of Moses' experience on Mount Sinai. Its precise significance in the Dionysian Corpus, however, has provoked considerable critical discussion, whose focus has been the extent to which "darkness" may be supposed to signify a personal experience of mystical union - as the term undoubtedly does, for example, in the works of the sixteenth century exponent of the negative tradition, St. John of the Cross. H.-C Puech's article, "La ténèbre mystique chez le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite et dans la tradition patristique" is devoted to an exploration of this issue. Opposing

viewpoints have been taken by Lebreton⁸³ - who insists that Ps.-Dionysius is fundamentally a neoplatonist and that the notion of darkness, in common with the other negative aspects of Dionysian theology, can thus have nothing other than a purely intellectual basis in the proposition of divine transcendence - and Völker,⁸⁴ who is inclined to see a more inward experience of mystic union as underlying Ps.-Dionysius' usage of the concept of dark contemplation in the first three chapters of the De Mystica Theologia.

Darkness is, in fact, connected with two distinct phases of the mystic way in the Dionysian Corpus. It is most often associated with the highest level of mystical awareness, but it can also denote - again traditionally - the condition of the unregenerate soul which has not been initiated into the mysteries of religion. Thus, Ps.-Dionysius writes in the fourth chapter of the De Divinis Nominibus:

The Good God is called Spiritual Light (φῶς, ἀλλὰ νοῦτον) because He fills every heavenly mind with spiritual light (πάντα ἀγγελικὸν νοῦν φωτίζειν), and drives all ignorance and error (ἄγνοιαν) from all souls where they have gained a lodgment, and giveth them all a share of holy light (φωτίζειν τὸ φῶς) and purges their spiritual eyes from the mist of ignorance which surrounds them, and stirs and opens the eyes which are fast shut and weighed down with darkness (τὸν ψυχῶν πρότερον ἀπελαύνειν τὸ τῆς πλάνης σκότος καὶ οὕτω φωτίζειν).⁸⁵

Darkness here is contrasted with the more perfect state of illumination. The concept and terminology are familiar from Gregory of Nyssa's teaching on the preliminary stages of contemplation, though the neoplatonic connotations are marked, and the image of "darkness" is used to signify intellectual error rather than sin. "Darkness", as indicating "absence of light", is the logical contrary of the state of awareness which is designated "light".⁸⁶

"Darkness" and "light" are equated, however, as terms signifying divine transcendence. Ps.-Dionysius establishes their identity of meaning in the fifth of his letters:

La divine ténèbre est l'inaccessible lumière où Dieu est dit habiter.

Elle est invisible à cause de sa clarté transcendante, et elle est inaccessible à cause de l'éminence de sa suressentielle effusion de lumière.

(Ὁ θεῖος γνόφος ἐστὶ τὸ ἀπρόσιτον φῶς ἐν ᾧ κατοικεῖν ὁ θεὸς λέγεται

καὶ ἀοράτῳ γε ὄντι διὰ τὴν υπερέχουσαν φανότητά καὶ ἀπρόσιτῳ τῷ αὐτῷ διὰ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς ὑπερουσίου φωτοχυσίας).⁸⁷

Vanneste notes that the term γνόφος ("darkness") occurs only seven times in the Dionysian Corpus, and he records only a single instance of it in the De Divinis Nominibus (VII, 2).⁸⁸ Here, as in Letter V, it is associated with the negative vocabulary which denotes the inapplicability of finite concepts to God, and thus with the ὑπερ-terminology which makes explicit the connotations of excess rather than deficiency which underlie the negative mode - τὰ κατὰ στέρησιν λεγόμενα ἐπὶ θεοῦ, καὶ τὰ ἐναντία ὑπεροχικῶς νοοῦνται.⁸⁹ Vanneste puts the point well:

Il ne s'agit donc pas uniquement de deux réalités contrastantes: le lumineux et l'obscur. Chacune des deux réalités revêtera, à son tour, une signification 'éminente' pour exprimer la réalité qui dépasse tout l'émané: le Transcendant sera désigné par l'obscur, en tant que négation divine et par le lumineux, en tant que désigné par un mot composé avec ὑπερ. Dès lors, outre le sens habituel d'un attribut positif - au niveau de la γνώσις et de l'οὐσία - la lumière et l'obscurité acquièrent un sens éminent pour exprimer une même réalité transcendante. Ainsi, l'Obscur transcendant et le Lumineux éminent coïncideront.⁹⁰

The Dionysian Corpus thus affirms the imputation of "darkness" to God. "Darkness" is also, however, by inference, a metaphor for the condition of unknowing which is the culmination of the mystic way and the soul's initiation into unitive awareness. The use of γνόφος in

this context derives from the reference in Exodus 20.21, and Ps.-Dionysius recapitulates the narrative of Moses' experience on Sinai and the traditional exegesis of the episode in relation to the mystic way at the end of the first chapter of the De Mystica Theologia.⁹¹

God is encountered mystically, he writes, by those who

... leave behind them (ἀπολιμπάνουσι) all divine enlightenments (θεῖα φῶτα) and voices (ἤχους) and heavenly utterances (λόγους οὐρανίους) and plunge into the Darkness (εἰς τὸν γνόφον εἰσδυομένοις) where truly dwells (οὗ ὄντος ἐστίν), as saith the Scripture (ὡς τὰ λόγια φησιν), that One Which is beyond all things (ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα). For not without reason is the blessed Moses bidden first to undergo purification himself (ἀποκαθαρθῆναι) and then to separate himself from those who have not undergone it; and after all purification (ἀποκάθαρσιν) hears the many-voiced trumpets and sees many lights flash forth with pure and diverse-streaming rays, and then stands separate from the multitudes and with the chosen priests presses forward to the topmost pinnacle of the Divine Ascent. Nevertheless he meets not with God Himself (οὐ συγγίνεται τῷ θεῷ), yet he beholds (θεωρεῖ) - not Him indeed (for He is invisible) (οὐκ αὐτὸν ἀθέατος γάρ) - but the place wherein He dwells (τὸν τόπον οὗ ἐστίν) ... His incomprehensible presence (ἡ ὑπὲρ πάσαν ἐπίνοιαν αὐτοῦ παρουσία) ... plunges the true initiate into the Darkness of Unknowing (εἰς τὸν γνόφον τῆς ἀγνωσίας εἰσδύνει τὸν ὄντως μυστικόν) wherein he renounces all the apprehensions of his understanding (ἀπομυεῖ πάσας τὰς γνωστικὰς ἀντιλήψεις) and is enwrapped in that which is wholly intangible and invisible (ἐν τῷ πάνπαν ἀναφεῖ καὶ ἀοράτῳ γίγνεται).⁹²

It has already been noted,⁹³ however, that the biblical narrative does not dominate Ps.-Dionysius' account of the mystic way either conceptually or linguistically, and the contrast in this respect with Gregory of Nyssa's mystical treatise, the Life of Moses, is stark. It rather serves Ps.-Dionysius' purpose, as a scheme for denoting the abandonment of sensual and intellectual knowledge, the process of aphairesis, which is the basis of his mystical theology. Thus, in the first paragraph of the De Mystica Theologia, the biblical concept of entry into the darkness which surrounds the divine (γνόφον) is associated with the notion of initiation into ultimate silence (σιγῆς) which Ps.-Dionysius derived from the mystery religions⁹⁴ - both terminologies have equal

status as a means of formulating the conditions of union with the transcendent. Ps.-Dionysius' treatment of the Exodus narrative is also highly selective. The relevant events occupy chapters 19-24 of the O.T. book; the De Mystica Theologia, however, includes only such details as give substance to the mystical theory which it expounds. Ps.-Dionysius' interpretation of the episode also deviates from the traditional exegesis in certain essential respects. Traditionally, the account of Moses' preparations for sight of God was held to signify the purgative phase of the contemplative way: Ps.-Dionysius, however, deflects attention from its moral or ascetic aspects, and elicits a meaning from the text which confirms his theory of aphairesis and is consistent with the emphasis of the Corpus as a whole on the rejection of finite modes of knowledge as a way to awareness of the transcendent. The text of Exod. 20.21 itself, as Vanneste has indicated, is cited with two significant variations: the normal reading is Μωυση̃ς δὲ εἰση̃λθεν εἰς τὸν γνόφον οὗ ἦν ὁ θεός - Ps.-Dionysius, however, substitutes ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα ("that One Which is beyond all things") for the simple title "God" (ὁ θεός) of the original version, and the mystery term εἰσδύεσθαι (lit. "to penetrate") for the non-committal verb εἰση̃λθεν (lit. "he entered").⁹⁵ The first modification reasserts the centrality of the principle of divine transcendence and makes explicit the connexion between this proposition and the biblical concept of γνόφος; the second affirms that the same circumstance equates mystery symbolism with biblical models as exemplifying the pattern and establishing the vocabulary of the mystic way.

"Darkness" in the Dionysian Corpus, therefore, signifies both the notion of divine transcendence and, as an extension of this, the condition of unknowing with regard to finite concepts which enables the

soul to apprehend God unitively. It denotes both the location and the manner of mystical awareness. Thus, whatever may be inferred concerning Ps.-Dionysius' own mystical experience, it is clear that the term "darkness" is used in his writings without intent to convey anything of the actuality of mystical experience. H.-C Puech has already noted that Ps.-Dionysius only refers to γνόφος in the context of the Moses narrative: he comments,

... Denys paraît au fond indifférent à une traduction, ou à une transcription, de l'expérience mystique sur le registre de la luminosité ou sur celui de l'obscurité. L'équation qui ouvre la Lettre V: 'la Nuée⁹⁶ divine est la Lumière inaccessible où Dieu est dit habiter', semble décisive. Mais il y a mieux: la description de Th.Myst.I, 3, où intervient la Nuée, a un parallèle dans un développement de D.N., VII, 3, 872B. Mais ici plus d'image obscure. Toute se passe dans la seule lumière: 'Et il y a, à l'inverse (par opposition à la démarche cataphatique) la inconnaissance très divine de Dieu, celle qui se fait par unconnnaissance (δί' ἀγνωσίας), selon l'union supérieure à l'intelligence, lorsque l'intelligence, s'étant éloignée de tous les êtres, ensuite s'étant également détachée de soi, est unie aux rayons supra-lumineux (ταῖς ὑπερφαέσιν ἀκτίσιν), de là et là illuminée d'en haut dans l'insondable abîme de la Sagesse'. Il résulte au moins de cette confrontation que l'obscurité n'est pas un élément constitutif de l'ascension mystique. Si la Ténèbre s'était vraiment imposée à Denys dans l'expérience même de l'union, il n'aurait pas manqué d'en faire partout et toujours la condition permanente, l'étape nécessaire du processus qu'il analyse ici et là. Si la Nuée est ici absente et là présente, l'origine en doit être cherchée ailleurs que dans une expérience.⁹⁷

The term "darkness" is, indeed, part of the biblical vocabulary which Ps.-Dionysius employed to express his mystical theology: he observes its technical status and establishes its logical accountability within its biblical framework. It is not, as Puech maintains, fundamental to his theology. Logically, it is the equivalent of transcendent light, and outside the context of the Moses narrative, Ps.-Dionysius habitually describes union with God as an encounter with the "light" - emphasizing the transcendent character of this light by the use of negative epithets. Thus he writes in Ch.V of the De Divinis Nominibus:

... the soul, becoming Godlike (θεοειδής), meets in the blind embraces of an incomprehensible union (δι' ἐνώσεως ἀγνώσται) the Rays of the unapproachable light (τὸ ἀπόσιτον φῶς).⁹⁸

Both concepts are interlinked in the powerful invocation which opens the De Mystica Theologia:

Guide us to the topmost height of mystic lore which exceedeth light and more than exceedeth knowledge (ἴθουνον ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν μυστικῶν λογίων ὑπεράγνωστον καὶ ὑπερφᾶν καὶ ἀκροτάτην κορυφήν), where the simple, absolute and unchangeable mysteries of heavenly truth (ἄτρεπτα τῆς θεολογίας μυστήρια) lie hidden in the dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence (κατὰ τὸν ὑπερφωτον ἐγκεκάλυπται τῆς κρυφιομύστου σιγῆς γνόφον), outshining all brilliance (τὸ ὑπερφανεστάτον ὑπερλάμποντα) with the intensity of their darkness (ἐν τῷ σκοτεινοτάτῳ).⁹⁹

The paradoxical mode of this paragraph is the linguistic counterpart of the proposition that the divine exceeds natural processes of cognition and their associated terminology. It reaffirms that "light" and "darkness" exist as contraries only on a conceptual level and the opposition ceases to have meaning where the reality they designate is held to transcend differentiation. By his use of paradox, Ps.-Dionysius attempts to frustrate the dualism which language entails, yet which is fundamentally at odds with the notion of a transcendent God and with the theory of mystic union.

The paradox of "luminous darkness", moreover, also affirms Ps.-Dionysius' contention that the unitive experience is essentially cognitive. Its effect depends partly on the inherent potency of the terms - their evocation of a positive if unimaginable condition as the goal of the process of aphairesis - and partly on the traditional associations of the symbol of "light" with the state of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. More importantly, however, the simultaneously negative and affirmative implications of the paradox - the

hypothesis that "transcendent light" is effectively "not-light" and hence equivalent to "darkness" - are formally related to Ps.-Dionysius' theory that mystic awareness of God is "knowledge" or "vision" in a transcendent sense - that is, "not-knowledge" and "not-vision" in the normal sense of the terms. The two passages which best illustrate the point have been alluded to in whole or in part before, but merit reproducing in full to substantiate the present argument. The first is the opening of Ch.II of the De Mystica Theologia:

Unto this Darkness which is beyond Light (τὸν ὑπέρφωτον... γνόφον) we pray that we may come, and may attain unto vision (ἰδεῖν) through the loss of sight and knowledge (δι' ἀβλεψίας καὶ ἀγνοσίας), and that in ceasing thus to see or to know (τὸ μὴ ἰδεῖν μηδὲ γνῶναι) we may learn to know (γνῶναι) that which is beyond all perception and understanding (τὸ ὑπὲρ θεῶν καὶ γνῶσιν) (for this emptying of our faculties is true sight and knowledge) (τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ ὄντως ἰδεῖν καὶ γνῶναι).¹⁰⁰

The second passage is the first section of Letter V, To Dorothy:

La divine ténèbre est l'inaccessible lumière (ὁ θεῖος γνόφος ἐστὶ τὸ ἀπόσιτον φῶς.) où Dieu est dit habiter. Elle est invisible (ἀοράτω) à cause de sa clarté transcendante (τὴν ὑπερέχουσαν φανότητα), et elle est inaccessible (ἀπροσίτω) à cause de l'éminence de sa suessentielle effusion de lumière (τῆς ὑπερουσίου φωτοχυσίας). Tous ceux-là y pénètrent (ἐν τούτῳ γίνεται) qui méritent de connaître (γνῶναι) et de voir (ἰδεῖν) Dieu; et précisément, par le fait du non-voir (αὐτῷ τῷ μὴ ὁρᾶν) et du non-connaître (μηδὲ γινώσκειν), ils arrivent vraiment dans ce qui est au-delà de toute vue et connaissance (ἐν τῷ ὑπὲρ ὁρασιν καὶ γνῶσιν γιγνόμενος).¹⁰¹

The logical symmetry of the passages is precise. Both insist on the cognitive nature of mystic union, yet dissociate perception of this order from natural processes of cognition and maintain its resistance to expression in conceptual language. Ps.-Dionysius, it has been noted, holds that the soul's ultimate union with God is achieved through ecstasy, and the paradoxical mode reflects the non-rationality of the

ecstatic state. He seems to suggest further, however, that the soul's final union with God is effected through a special faculty - the attainment of knowledge through unknowing, that is, is defined as knowledge "according to the soul's highest faculty" (κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον). Ps.-Dionysius's use of this phrase in two key passages which describe unitive knowledge suggests that he regarded it as a technical expression denoting a specifically mystical faculty of the human soul: it occurs in the first chapter of the De Mystica Theologia, where Ps.-Dionysius refers to the soul as being "united by his highest faculty (κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον) to Him that is wholly Unknowable",¹⁰² and again in Letter I, To Gaius, which ends,

Et l'inconnaissance totale (παντελὴς ἀγνωσία) selon un mode meilleur (κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον), est une connaissance (γνώσις) de Celui qui est au-delà de tout ce qui est connu (τοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ γινωσκόμενα).¹⁰³

Ps.-Dionysius does not, however, seem to develop the point beyond statements of this kind, but they seem to confirm that he envisaged mystical knowledge as remaining essentially intellectual, though at a level transcending finite modes of intellection, and the mystical faculty as a transcendent form of intellect.

IV. Conclusion

It has been suggested that Ps.-Dionysius drew on the vocabulary and system of linguistic formulae which Gregory of Nyssa had already harnessed to contemplative theology as a means of formulating his own mystical theory. Clearly, however, he developed them independently, subjecting them to logical analysis and classifying them, according to their biblical origin, as one of the possible coherent terminologies appropriate to the expression of mystical theology. His treatment of the concept of "luminous darkness" provides an interesting example of

his method. The paradox of ὑπέρφωτον...γνόφον ("Darkness which is beyond Light") recalls the concept of λαμπρὸς γνόφος ("luminous darkness") in Gregory of Nyssa: the two phrases derive from the same biblical allusion and correspond grammatically. Ps.-Dionysius, however, does not use the expression except with specific reference to the Exodus narrative, nor does he follow Gregory's example of constructing comparable phrases on the same oxymoronic model ("sober inebriation", "wakeful sleep", for example) to denote other aspects of the mystical state. He substitutes ὑπέρφωτον, moreover, for Gregory's adjective λαμπρὸς: he is not satisfied, that is, with the simple oxymoron as a means of embodying the notion of divine transcendence. Thus he qualifies it by the further paradox implicit in the prefix ὑπερ-, insisting that God is not light in any conceptual sense, and hence in one sense not light at all. Paradox qualifies paradox, and the language imitates the divine itself in receding before human efforts to comprehend and articulate its nature. The closest approximation to the divine is thus silence, as Ps.-Dionysius maintains in the third chapter of the De Mystica Theologia:

... plunging into the Darkness (εἰσδύνοντες γνόφον) which is above the intellect we shall find ourselves reduced not merely to brevity of speech (οὐ βραχυλογία) but to absolute dumbness both of speech (ἄλογίαν παντελή) and thought (ἄνοησίαν).¹⁰⁴

Ps.-Dionysius insists on the abandonment of discursive modes, which are inherently divisive and involve the contemplative in the process of time, since God is held to transcend all distinction, space and time, and the soul's approach to union with God is a reversion to singleness.

It is perhaps fairest, however, to conclude this study of the language of the Dionysian Corpus by emphasizing the adroitness with

which the author manipulates his medium in order to achieve an accurate verbal representation of his analysis of the rationale of mystical theology. Fairest, because such an assessment seems to take account of both the virtues and the deficiencies of his method. It is true that Ps.-Dionysius rarely evinces the same fine responsiveness to the evocative power of words which distinguishes Gregory of Nyssa's work. Neither does his vocabulary on the whole have the concreteness and immediacy of Gregory's terminology - partly because the method and purpose of the Dionysian Corpus are essentially dialectic, and partly because the texts are not exegetical. They lack the scope and density which the wealth of biblical allusion impresses on Gregory's work. Further, they lack the peculiarly powerful personal appeal which Gregory achieves for his treatises through his association of the soul's contemplative experience with its sacramental life within the church. The way of aphairesis, in the Dionysian Corpus, is not tempered by a theology which in some sense engages the emotional and sensual life of the initiate. In comparison with Gregory's mystical vocabulary, therefore, Ps.-Dionysius' language is limited and austere. On the other hand, however, the very concentration of Dionysian language sharpens its clarity and precision. Its logical accountability, its well-defined function and the exactitude with which its ideological frame of reference is described are better calculated to control the reader's response and ensure proper interpretation than Gregory's loosely evocative style.

It may be that something of the richness and vitality of Gregory's writing was lost in Ps.-Dionysius' assimilation of some of the principles of his mystical theology. Ps.-Dionysius, however, consolidated and

systematized mystical theory and language, and ensured, both through his assumed apostolic status and his authoritative prose style, that negative mystical theology was absorbed into Western Christianity during the following centuries.

CHAPTER III

LATIN AND ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE DE MYSTICA THEOLOGIA: a study of the translation of Dionysian mystical vocabulary and of developments in the interpretation of Dionysian theology which influenced the English version, the Deonise Hid Diuinite.

There is some evidence to suggest that the works of Ps.-Dionysius were accessible to scholars in the West at a comparatively early date, albeit only in their original Greek form. Apart from appeals to the authority of the Dionysian tracts at the Council of Constantinople in 533 and later at the Lateran Council of 649, their author was known to St. Gregory as "antiquus et venerabilis pater",¹ despite the fact that Gregory, like most theologians of his era, was himself unfamiliar with the Greek language and is thus unlikely to have known the texts at first hand. It also seems that a manuscript of the Dionysian Corpus was sent from Rome to Paris in about 758, as a gift from Pope Paul I to Pépin le Bref, though nothing more than an epistolary record of this event remains.² The history of the systematic absorption of Dionysian theology into Western thought effectively dates from the ninth century and the presentation of a manuscript of the treatises to Louis le Débonnaire by Michel le Bègue, Emperor of Constantinople, in 827. Surviving documents provide very precise information concerning the acquisition and subsequent fate of this manuscript, still extant and identified by P.G. Théry, O.P., as M.S. Paris B.N. gr.437. It was received at Compiègne in September 827 and deposited at the Abbey of Saint-Denis, Paris, on the 8th of the following October, where it was translated for the first time into Latin by the Abbot Hilduin on the instructions of Charles le Chauve. Abbot Hilduin's was thus the forerunner of the series of Latin versions of the Corpus which, during the

succeeding centuries, in conjunction with multiple glosses and commentaries on the texts, endeavoured to clarify Dionysian theology and disseminate it among as wide an audience of European scholars as possible.³

The work of P. Théry and, more recently, of H.F. Dondaine has done much to elucidate the extremely complex situation regarding the numerous manuscripts of the Latin Corpus as well as to estimate the nature and extent of the individual achievements of the authors of the various versions. The scope of the present thesis, however, cannot accommodate any significant incursion into this vast and highly specialized field of research. It has seemed expedient to consider the transition of Dionysian mystical language from Greek to Latin in detail in respect only of the vocabulary of the De Mystica Theologia, both because this text is the primary source of the thought and expression characteristic of negative theology for the author of the Cloud of Unknowing in common with other writers in the Dionysian mystical tradition, and, perhaps more importantly, because it constitutes a direct link with the English author: it is generally accepted that he translated the text into the vernacular in order, as he claims in his brief prologue, to corroborate the doctrines which he puts forward in the Cloud itself.⁴ Further, the most pragmatic and economic method of documenting this linguistic transition has been to treat it retrospectively in relation to the terminology of the English text, accepting the obvious limitations of a procedure which can take satisfactory account of only the immediate Latin sources of the Deonise Hid Diuinite - the Sarracenus and Gallus versions of the text, that is - and inevitably fails to devote sufficient attention to the handling of the Greek vocabulary in the earlier Latin versions of the De Mystica Theologia.

This narrowly linguistic discussion of the De Mystica Theologia must, however, be prefaced by a summary description of the various Latin translations of the Dionysian Corpus which date from the medieval period: namely, the ninth century versions of Hilduin and Scot Erigena, and those compiled by Sarracenus, Thomas Gallus and Robert Grosseteste during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵ That no fewer than five distinct renderings of these treatises should have been produced in Europe between the ninth and thirteenth centuries testifies to the high regard in which they were held, in particular among continental scholars. It seems to indicate, moreover, that the apparently considerable scholarly demand for intelligible working texts of Ps.-Dionysius was not adequately met by the pioneering versions of the first translators and continued to stimulate new efforts to refine the existing Latin Corpus.

I. Latin versions of the De Mystica Theologia compiled between the ninth and thirteenth centuries

The state of Greek scholarship over the period in question inevitably has some bearing on this last assumption concerning the persistent need for Latin versions of the texts. It is difficult to assess with any certainty the situation obtaining in the ninth century when the manuscript gift of Michel le Bègue was received in the West, though many of the deficiencies of the Hilduin version and the large component of transliterated Greek words in its vocabulary may be attributed to the translator's limited knowledge of the Greek language and the evident tentativeness with which he handles the medium.⁶ The text of Erigena's translation contains a similarly high proportion of Greek terminology-among the Greek words preserved in the De Mystica Theologia alone are such key terms as "theosophiae", "kataphaskein",

"apophaskein", "gnostica" and "organum" - and P. Théry entertains the possibility that its author, like Hilduin, was only imperfectly conversant with Greek.⁷ His suggestion seems to find support in Cappuyns' pessimistic assessment of the condition of Greek scholarship in the ninth century and his proposal that, at least prior to 851, Erigena was unexceptional in possessing nothing more than a rudimentary working knowledge of the language.⁸ His rise to preeminence as a Greek scholar, according to Cappuyns, coincided with his undertaking to translate the Dionysian Corpus at the request of Charles le Chauve, and his mastery of Greek increased only as the project advanced. It is certain, however, that Erigena became one of the foremost Greek scholars of his age, and this circumstance lends force to other evidence which implies a need to look further than the question of his proficiency in the Greek language to account completely for the hellenic bias of Erigena's translation.

The Erigena Translation (Vetus translatio or Versio Dionysii)

Both Cappuyns and Théry admit contemporary scholarly taste for insinuating Greek phrases into Latin compositions, as a means of parading erudition, as a significant factor in determining Erigena's practice in his Dionysian translations.⁹ Rather more to Erigena's credit, however, was his sensitivity to the inherent difficulties of the Dionysian treatises and his recognition of their distance, ideologically and spiritually as well as linguistically, from his own age. He describes the Corpus in these terms:

Opus valde, ut opinamur, anfractuosum, longeque a modernis sensibus remotum, multis invium, paucis apertam, non propter antiquitatem, verum etiam caelestium altitudinem mysteriorum.¹⁰

It seems to have been these considerations which above all dictated his method as a translator: he opted for close adherence to the text

of his original, transposing not only the vocabulary but also the syntax of the Greek into his own version, aiming in this way to reproduce the text as faithfully as possible as a means of minimizing the dangers, inevitably attendant on the process of translation, of distorting the original meaning and thus compounding the already formidable obscurities of the Greek Corpus. He is, he goes on to insist in his preface, a translator and not a commentator, and he is eager to defend the scrupulous precision with which he has accomplished his undertaking against potential critics of his text:

Sin vero obscuram minusque apertam praedictae interpretationis senem iudicaverit, videat me interpretem huius operis esse, non expositorem. Ubi valde pertimesco ne forte culpam infidi interpretis incurram. At si aut superflua quaedam superadiecta esse, aut de integritate graecae constructionis quaedam deesse arbitratus fuerit, recurrat ad codicem graecum, unde ego interpretatus sum; ibi fortassis inveniet itane est necne.¹¹

Interestingly, his method is in some respects comparable with that of Robert Grosseteste, who, some four centuries later and with the benefit of the translations of his predecessors Erigena and Sarracenus as well as additional manuscripts of the Greek Corpus, endeavoured to achieve the same literal accuracy in his rendering of the texts.¹²

The advantages of this procedure need not be dwelt on, but it also entails problems which neither translator was completely successful in resolving. The literalness of the translation, for example, in both instances involved the imposition of an alien idiom on the Latin language, which impeded the fluency of the Latin versions and tended to mask the sense of the texts. Théry comments on this aspect of Erigena's work,

Scot... a fait effort pour traduire le vocabulaire dionysien, l'ossature de la pensée, si on peut s'exprimer ainsi; mais les articulations, l'élément vital que la syntaxe communique à cette pensée, ont été sacrifiées. Scot n'était sans doute pas suffisamment helléniste pour réussir cette opération difficile: transposer

en une autre langue la vie d'une langue originale.¹³

Moreover, it is undoubtedly the case, as Théry implies here, that the limitations of Erigena's ability to execute his project all too frequently exacerbated the drawbacks of his method of translation itself and thwarted his purpose of clarifying the obscurities of the Corpus. Théry notes unintelligible passages of the Versio Dionysii which are attributable to Erigena's imperfect grasp of Greek syntax - his tendency to confuse grammatical parts, his uncertain handling of prepositions and recurrent failure to distinguish verbs from substantives. Indeed, in evaluating Erigena's achievement in the Versio Dionysii, it is necessary to recognize not only its magnitude and positive value, but also its serious shortcomings. Cappuyns takes account of both considerations:

À considérer dans son ensemble l'oeuvre d'Érigène traducteur, on ne manque pas d'être frappé par une réelle richesse, une réelle fermeté du vocabulaire, voire de la terminologie philosophique, laquelle contribua grandement d'ailleurs à constituer le langage technique des penseurs médiévaux.¹⁴ Si cependant nous regardons de plus près, bien des lacunes et des imperfections: il y a trop de mots mal coupés... trop de confusions entre termes graphiquement ou phonétiquement voisins... trop d'interprétations fautives ou approximatives surtout ... il y a aussi trop de fluctuation et de variété dans les traductions successives d'un même terme ... et trop de mots grecques conservés tels quels dans le texte latin (une cinquantaine pour le seul Denys).¹⁵

With specific regard to the hellenic bias of Erigena's translation, Théry contributes a further general observation concerning both the extent and the nature of his achievement:

Très obscure dans une multitude de détails, par suite d'une mauvaise lecture du manuscrit original, et d'une connaissance imparfaite de la langue grecque, la version de Scot a par contre le mérite de mettre en relief les grandes lignes de la doctrine dionysienne...

The claim is an important one. The justification for it is considered

more fully by René Roques in his article "Traduction ou interprétation? Brèves remarques sur Jean Scot traducteur de Denys".¹⁶ Roques demonstrates the extent to which Erigena - despite the firm assertions of his preface - inevitably interprets as well as translates the Greek Corpus, since he is himself a philosopher and theologian, and anxious, moreover, to prove a large measure of agreement between the quasi-apostolic author and his own theories. He stresses Erigena's concern to accentuate the broad outlines of Dionysian theology and, like Théry, records his notable success in this undertaking.

... Jean Scot, qui disposait de la traduction d'Hilduin, et qui, grammaticalement et philologiquement parlant, est parfois moins heureux que lui, marque néanmoins un progrès très sensible dans l'intelligence des grands thèmes et des grandes notions dionysiennes qu'il n'aborde plus seulement en grammairien, mais en théologien-philosophe soucieux de cohérence doctrinale.¹⁷

In particular, he singles out Erigena's achievement in explicating the central Dionysian concept of the negative and affirmative ways which had clearly eluded Hilduin's grasp:

Hilduin n'a pas reconnu l'opposition apophasis - cataphase, et, en conséquence, il ne semble pas avoir correctement compris l'opposition dionysienne entre théologie négative et théologie affirmative. Si, en effet, κατάφασις et καταφάσκω sont justement traduits par 'professio', 'affirmatio', 'affirmare', 'predicare', en revanche ἀπόφασις et ἀποφάσκω sont habituellement rendus par 'sentencia' et 'dicere', deux termes qui n'impliquent pas, de soi, l'idée essentielle de négativité inhérente aux deux termes grecs.

Or ici, les traductions de Jean Scot sont irréprochables: κατάφασις et καταφάσκω sont traduits par 'affirmatio', 'intentio', 'affirmare', et ἀπόφασις et ἀποφάσκω par 'negatio', 'depulsio', 'negare', 'depellere'.¹⁸

The caveat that Erigena perhaps exaggerated Ps.-Dionysius' distinctions to reinforce his own philosophical position does not detract from his contribution to the transmission of Dionysian theology and the development of a Latin vocabulary answerable to its large demands.

Théry's assessment of Erigena's overall achievement resumes,

Il y a plus: avec la version de Scot, on conserve l'impression qu'on ne trouvera plus dans aucune autre version, d'être en contact avec une pensée exotique. Par son souci de littéralité, et aussi par la timidité que lui donne sa connaissance incomplète du grecque qui ne lui permet pas de s'écarter du texte original, Scot nous a donné un Denys grec: ce qui constitue souvent une garantie de fidélité... Dans l'ensemble des traductions, celle de Scot est comme un pont; le Denys qu'elle présente - tout en devenant accessible dans l'ensemble aux penseurs occidentaux - a conservé tout ce qu'il lui était possible de sa saveur orientale.¹⁹

This estimate of Erigena's Versio Dionysii places it historically in relation to the other medieval translations of the Greek Corpus; it also, however, aptly summarizes the principal grounds for dissatisfaction with the text in the twelfth century. Undoubtedly, Erigena's preservation of the vocabulary and idiom of the Greek original was a major stumbling block to scholars in a period when, it seems generally agreed, Greek studies were in decline outside Italy and Sicily, rendering Erigena's translation almost as impenetrable to scholars as the Greek Corpus itself. The poor condition of Greek scholarship, which Théry traces to a variety of economic, geographical and political causes,²⁰ was apparently instrumental in preparing the way for a new version of the Corpus in two important respects. Firstly, as has been suggested, it disqualified Erigena's text from fulfilling the manifest need among theologians and philosophers unfamiliar with Greek for an intelligible Latin version of the Dionysian treatises; and secondly, the widespread ignorance of Greek set severe limits to the scope of scholarship - curbs which impelled scholars to look increasingly to the hellenic world as a potential source of fresh ideas and, in particular, drew attention to the known but barely accessible and still wholly untapped resources of the Dionysian Corpus.²¹

The Sarracenus Translation (Nova translatio)

The immediate background to the Sarracenus version of the Greek Corpus (completed c1167) can be determined yet more precisely. The prologue to his commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy (probably dating from c1140) is, in the first instance, extremely revealing and merits quoting at length:

Inter Scriptores ecclesiasticos primum locum post apostolos ariopagita dyonisius sicut tempore ita, eciam theologice sapiencie doctrina et auctoritate possidere creditur quippe quiet ab eisdem apostolis eorumque auditoribus uberius edoctus, valde ultra ceteros de supercelestibus est locutus, cuius scripta vel litteratura sententiarum pondere usque adeo sunt gravia ut pre nimia difficultate intelligendi vix legantur ab aliquo. Quibus et interpres minus quam oportuisset, ut arbitror, eruditus; non parum obscuritatis superaddidit. In quorum explanacione librorum doctiores audire tacendo potius vellem si fieri posset. Sed quia nec expositor nec didascalus apud nos reperitur qui hos edisserat et fructuosissima eorum scientia velut absconditum parum aut nichil utilitatis humanis usibus afferre videtur; interim de primo qui de angelica inscribitur Ierarchia quod Dominus dederit, nunc brevius nunc aliquantulum prolixius et aliquotiens quasi excedendo qualicumque sermone loquamur, ut si quis erudicior inde tractare voluerit, reseratam aliquatenus teneat viam. Sed ne aliter quam nostri maiores incipiamus sapere, ex dictis sanctorum inserere decrevimus et cetera prout senserimus Deo auctore proferre de nostro...²²

It is interesting to note here Sarracenus' endorsement of the traditional ascription of the Greek Corpus to the convert of St. Paul, established by the ninth century Vita Dionysii of Abbot Hilduin. More important in the present context, however, is his echoing of Erigena's complaints about the intrinsic difficulties of the Dionysian treatises - with the addition of his own opinion that the earlier translator did more to augment than to resolve them. The consequence, as Sarracenus sees it, is that texts of immeasurable value to contemporary scholarship are unavoidably neglected, because there is neither "expositor nec didascalus" who is able to expound them on the basis of the unintelligible Versio Dionysii.²³

The pressing need in the twelfth century was therefore for a comprehensible Latin text of the Dionysian Corpus, and philosophers and theologians turned predictably to Sarracenus as the foremost Greek scholar of his day - "comme à un linguiste non comme à un penseur", as Théry puts it.²⁴ The immediate stimulus seems, however, to have come from the philosopher and personal friend of Sarracenus, John of Salisbury. The evidence for this proposition is a letter from Sarracenus to John of Salisbury (probably written before 1116), which announces the completion of his revision of the Celestial Hierarchy and clearly intimates that he had been commissioned to provide his correspondent with an intelligible working text of Ps.-Dionysius.²⁵ John of Salisbury, it seems, was typical of scholars of his day in possessing only a rudimentary knowledge of Greek, certainly inadequate to surmount the difficulties of Erigena's Versio Dionysii. It is significant that while he apparently owned texts of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and the Celestial Hierarchy, he cites Ps.-Dionysius only once in his Metalogicon (Bk.II, ch.XX).

The project began, Théry suggests, as nothing more than an attempt to make the existing Latin Corpus serviceable to scholars, primarily by means of an extensive commentary on the text. It soon became apparent, however, that this object could only be effectively achieved through a complete revision of Erigena's translation.

The principles on which Sarracenus based his translation differed widely from those of Erigena. An extract from his letter to John of Salisbury which prefaces the Celestial Hierarchy delineates some of the problems he encountered with the texts and indicates some of the criteria governing his practice as a translator:

Fateor tamen elegantias me dictorum eruditissimi et disertissimi viri, oratione latinae exprimere nequivisse. Nam apud Graecos quaedam compositiones inveniuntur, quibus eleganter et proprie res significantur, apud Latinos autem eadem res duabus aut pluribus dictionibus ineleganter et improprie et quandoque insufficienter designantur. Ad commendationem etiam alicujus personae vel alterius rei, pulchre, articuli apud eos repetuntur, et per eosdem articulos multae orationes sibi invicem perpolite connectuntur. Taceo de insigni constructione participiorum et infinitorum articulis conjunctorum. Hujusmodi autem elegantiae apud Latinos nequeunt inveniri. Contingit etiam quod si dictiones eo ordine quo sunt posite transferantur, aut difficulter intelligantur, aut aliam sententiam facere videantur. Eapropter, ubi congruum duxi, dictionum ordinem conservavi; alicubi vero propter faciliorem intellectum ordinem commutavi; ubi vero Graecis dictionibus aequipollentes Latinas non reperi, vel locutionem a Latinorum idiomate discrepare comperi; vel Graecas dictiones detorsi, vel de sensu auctoris quoad potui et ut potui, Latinas dictionibus designavi. Saepe autem ubi duas vel tres dictiones Latinas pro una Graeca posui, eas quasi unam conjunxi: non quod unam dictionem ex his esse vellem, sed ut planior intellectus fieret et quantum elegantiae ex inopia Latinae locutionis tractatus iste perderet, appareret.

Sarracenus registers here his sense of the poverty of the Latin language by comparison with Greek²⁶ and outlines some of the difficulties involved in accommodating syntactical features of one language in the idiom of another. He specifies, for example, the problems of rendering Greek compound terms and expressions preceded by the article, and he is particularly insistent on the impracticability of adhering strictly to the word order of the original. In this respect, he differs radically from both Hilduin and Erigena, rejecting their cautious literalism in favour of a freer and more interpretative method of translation.²⁷ He is more concerned to transmit the sense of the Dionysian treatises intact than to preserve verbal accuracy at the expense of the meaning, and is appreciably more flexible in his handling of both the material of his original and the languages with which he operates.

Little has yet been said concerning the manuscript sources of the Greek Corpus on which the various Latin versions of the texts were based, though clearly their role in determining the content and

character of the translations was decisive. The point is particularly apposite here, since Sarracenus' use of a base manuscript which was representative of a textual tradition different from that from which the earlier versions derive is among the key factors distinguishing his translation from those of Hilduin and Erigena.

P. Théry's deduction that the first two versions depend on the same manuscript - that presented to Louis by Michel le Bègue and identified as MS Paris B.N. grec 437 - seems to have won universal assent.²⁸ It is also certain that the considerable paleographical and textual problems which Hilduin and Erigena encountered with this manuscript gave rise to many of the obscurities promulgated in their own renderings of the Dionysian treatises. MS 437 is written in uncial script, with no separation of words and few accents;²⁹ and its major textual errors which are reproduced in the Hilduin and Erigena versions include, for example, confusion of passages as important as that in the Celestial Hierarchy Ch.II which deals with the relative merits of applying negative and positive language to God. The correct reading is only restored by Sarracenus, who is able to verify the text of Erigena against his own more accurate base manuscript.³⁰

In spite of its manifest inadequacies, however, MS 437 exercised indirect but nevertheless widespread influence on Dionysian scholarship in the Middle Ages. As the basis for Erigena's translation of the Greek Corpus, it was the primary source of Dionysian theology for the Latin text which effectively held the field alone during three centuries and figured largely in the compilation of the Sarracenus version which eventually superseded it. It has already been noted that the other translation dependent on it, that of Abbot Hilduin, seems not to have

circulated outside the Abbey of Saint-Denis, and indeed, the evidence suggests that the Greek manuscript was itself confined to the Abbey and was never transcribed during the medieval period. Théry, in his classification of the early manuscripts of the Greek Corpus, isolates MS 437 as the sole example of its type; by contrast, he cites a total of thirty seven manuscripts dating from the ninth to the twelfth centuries which he assigns to the second "Roman" or "anastasien" group of manuscripts.³¹

The two categories of manuscript are distinguished principally on two grounds: by variant readings³² and by the inclusion of the prologue and marginal scholia popularly attributed to Maximus in manuscripts belonging to the second group. These scholia are in fact the work of two distinct authors - Johannes Scythopolitanus Scholasticus (who wrote pre 530) and Maximus the Confessor (+662),³³ but from an early date they were confused under one name of Maximus and were even gradually assimilated into the Latin manuscript tradition of the Corpus itself. Dondaine gives a detailed account of this process, which began in 875 with the attempt of Anastasius the Librarian to amend some of the grosser errors of the Versio Dionysii. Anastasius' work on the Corpus in no respect constituted a new translation of the texts, but his adverse criticisms of Erigena's 'barbarous' text, as he terms it, which he lists outspokenly in a letter to Charles le Chauve dated 875, are interesting, in the first instance because they anticipate many of Sarracenus' objections to the earlier translation. The full text of the letter, "Inter cetera studia", is printed in P.L., XX11, 1025-1030, but its main drift is conveniently summarized by Théry in his article, "Documents concernant Jean Sarrazin":

il s'était collé, disait-il, au littéralisme le plus complet, par crainte de trahir la pensée dionysienne. Il n'avait pas reçu suffisamment de dons intellectuels pour évoluer à l'aise et avec élégance dans ces doctrines mystiques du Pseudo-Denys, et il avait arrivé ceci: que Scot mandaté pour traduire Denys, avait besoin lui-même d'être traduit: 'Unde factum est, ut tantum virum, qui per se quoniam intima et ardua quaeque utriusque philosophiae penetralia rimari proposuit, perplexus nostris intellectibus videbatur, intra cujusdam labyrinthi difficilia irretiret, et in antris profundioribus invisibiliorem quodammodo collocaret, et quem interpretaturum susceperat, adhuc redderet interpretandum.³⁴

Anastasius' dissatisfaction with the Versio Dionysii did not, as in the case of Sarracenus, issue in a complete revision of Erigena's translation, but his efforts to improve the text through the introduction of the explanatory scholia into the Latin tradition undoubtedly made a considerable impact on the evolution of the Corpus. He verified the text of Erigena against what his letter to Charles le Chauve describes as a special manuscript of the Dionysian treatises - a manuscript which, like that put to similar use by Sarracenus three centuries later, must clearly have belonged to Théry's second category.³⁵ Further, it seems that it must have been a text of Erigena revised in this way by Anastasius and almost certainly by Erigena himself which Sarracenus consulted extensively in compiling his own version of the Corpus.³⁶

Anastasius' amendments to the Versio Dionysii, therefore, and his admission of the scholia to the medieval Latin Corpus represented a considerable advance in the progress towards achieving an intelligible working text of the Pseudo-Dionysian tracts. On the one hand, as has been suggested, this process involved the utilization of more accurate, legible and annotated manuscripts to rectify the errors which were occasioned by MS 437. On the other hand, however, it required a succession of individual translators and commentators applying varying methods of translation to evolve a comprehensible text - which, as the

foregoing discussion has urged, essentially meant a latinized text. In both respects, the version of Sarracenus was pivotal: exploiting the additional manuscript resources which had not been available to his predecessor as a means of correcting Erigena's text, Sarracenus also set about systematically latinizing the Versio Dionysii. This entailed, firstly, the substitution of properly Latin terms for the transliterated Greek vocabulary of the Erigena text: "contemplatio" replaces "theoria" (e.g. E.H., Ch.II) and "apparitiones" or "visiones" occur where Erigena retains "theophanis" (e.g. D.N., Ch.X). Sarracenus allows Greek terminology only where, as in the case of "mysticus", the word had already become thoroughly assimilated into the Latin language.³⁷

The latinization of the text is not, however, restricted to the vocabulary but extends to the philosophical bias of Erigena's Dionysian translations. Marguerite Techert is among scholars who emphasize the neoplatonic orientation of Erigena's own philosophy. In her article, "Le Plotinisme dans le Système de Jean Scot Érigène", she argues that Erigena's philosophy - which she identifies as "un plotinisme mal déguisé sous ses idées théologiques" - may depend directly on Plotinus, and she classifies the mysticism of both writers as fundamentally "intellectualiste".³⁸ Sarracenus, as Théry demonstrates, undertakes to align the Dionysian Corpus - insofar as his role as translator permits - with the traditional Christianity of the Western Church for which his text was compiled:

Jean Sarrazin, avec une attention qui ne s'est jamais démenti, même pas une seule fois, scrute dans la version de Scot Érigène, tout ce qui pourrait rappeler une parenté quelconque du 'Corpus dionysiacum' avec les mystères orientaux. Le terme grec 'ieron', rendu chez Scot par 'sacrum' est traduit invariablement chez Sarrazin par 'sanctum' ... Sarrazin ne veut pas non plus admettre

dans sa révision le terme 'arcanum', qu'il traduit de plusieurs façons: tantôt par 'ineffabile' (N.D., Ch.I, ed. Opera Dionysii Carth., Tournai, 1902, t. XVI, p.351, 27), tantôt par 'non dicibile' (ibid., p.351, 29)... La rigueur que nous constatons tout au long de cette révision de Jean Sarrazin, est une preuve incontestable que nous nous trouvons en face d'une intention véritable, d'un souci voulu. Jean Sarrazin consciemment et volontairement, s'est appliqué, dans sa révision de Scot Érigène, à supprimer des écrits de Denis le caractère grec et oriental que Scot précisément lui avait conservé, sans doute, d'ailleurs, par insuffisance dans le maniement de la langue grecque. Avec Sarrazin, Denys devient fondamentalement latin, c'est-à-dire que dans la mesure où il devient latin, il cesse d'être lui-même.³⁹

Clearly, this process of dehellénizing the content of the Dionysian treatises demanded additional linguistic changes in order to eliminate verbal connotations which might run counter to orthodox Christian theology. Sarracenus seems to have concentrated in particular on those aspects of Erigena's translation which might invite pantheistic or agnostic interpretations. Thus, for example, he substitutes "ignotum" for Erigena's "incognoscibile" as a translation of Ps.-Dionysius' ἄγνωστον. Similarly, he avoids such phrases as "omne invisibile" or "omne intelligibile" as they are applied to God in, for example, Erigena's rendering of De Divinis Nominibus, Ch.II, preferring the qualified negative expression, "perfecte non intelligibile". In both instances, he rejects terminology which implicitly precludes all possibility of intellectual knowledge of God and thus leaves the text open to interpretation in terms of Christian doctrine on the divine infusion of knowledge through grace. Moreover, as Théry indicates, Erigena's translation of εἰς by "in", in conjunction with his consistent use of "unitas" as the equivalent of Greek ἕνωσις, offers further scope for misconstruction:

Cette traduction de εἰς par 'in' est constante chez Scot Érigène et contribuera quelque peu à donner à son travail une saveur panthéiste. Cette tendance panthéiste - au moins verbale - est renforcée par la traduction de ἕνωσις. Scot

rend toujours ce terme grec par 'unitas': 'interpretatio igitur hierarchiae est, ad Deum, quantum possibile, similitudo et unitas' (P.L. t. CXXI, col. 1044C): σκοπὸς οὖν ἱεραρχίας ἐστίν, ἢ πρὸς θεὸν, ὡς ἐφικτὸν, ἀφομοίωσις καὶ ἔνωσις (P.G., t. III, col. 165A). Sarrazin traduirait ἔνωσις par 'unitio' et εἰς par 'ad'... dans l'étude de cette version du XI^e siècle. Sarrazin corrigeait ainsi - à dessein très probablement - la tendance philologique panthéiste de la traduction de Scot.⁴⁰

Thomas Gallus: the Extractio and the Explanatio

It was principally at the hands of Thomas Gallus, first Abbot of the Victorine house at Vercelli († 1246), however, that Sarracenus' latinization of the Dionysian Corpus and his project to establish beyond question its total accord with orthodox Christian theology was finally brought to full effect. Gallus' work on the Dionysian texts is difficult to classify. He is, as Chatillon emphasizes in his "Chronique" of the Victorine school, primarily an exegete:⁴¹ his corpus includes three commentaries on the Canticle of Canticles, glosses and an extensive commentary (the Explanatio) on the Dionysian tracts, as well as the influential Extractio of the treatises.⁴² Although the writer and thirteenth century prior of the Carthusian house of Meyriat, Hugh of Balma, refers to this last text as the "tercia translatio" of the Greek Corpus,⁴³ his description is not strictly accurate. The Extractio is neither simple translation nor commentary, though it incorporates important characteristics of each. To these, Gallus contributes an intensely personal response to the Dionysian texts and a sense that he has himself experienced the reality of the mystical consciousness to which they refer. Further, his treatment of the texts reflects both the practicality and the sensitivity of a pastor concerned for the spiritual needs of those under his direction. Théry assesses it in the following terms:

C'est au fond son expérience personnelle acquise dans ses

longues méditations que Thomas Gallus veut nous présenter dans son Extractio. Il cherche avant tout à dégager les lignes essentielles de la pensée de Denys, à présenter cette quintessence comme un donné immédiatement assimilable, et assimilable sans grand effort. D'où s'il y a nécessité, pour atteindre ce but, d'abrégier certains textes afin d'en mieux souligner l'idée centrale, il faudra parfois aussi, en d'autres cas, donner quelques développements pour éclairer la doctrine. Quelques chapitres auront l'aspect d'une paraphrase, mais le plus souvent l'oeuvre du victorin se présentera comme un Compendium, comme une Extractio.⁴⁴

With remarkable penetration, Gallus pruned away all the excessive complexities of Dionysian theology to produce a version of the treatises impressive both for its intelligibility and its immediacy. Théry also notes his astuteness in anticipating the potential dangers for the would-be contemplative in failing to reconcile the Dionysian doctrine of divine transcendence with the Church's injunction to worship God: he thus appends his own comment to the text of Sarracenus which affirms the compatibility of the two aspects of Christian devotion:

sed oportet laudare eam sicut excellentem, segregatam ab omni auditu et motu vita, phantasia, opinione, nomine, verbo, deliberatione, intellectu, substantia, statione, fine, infinitate, et ab omni eo quod mente concipitur et generaliter ab omnibus existentibus. Ne tamen ab ejus laude cessetur.⁴⁵

Gallus gives his own account of the genesis of the Extractio in his preface to the work. The passage merits quoting in full:

Quum in libris magni Dionysii Areopagitae geminam experirer difficultatem, unam stili, alteram sententiae: ne tam pretiosos thesauros sapientiae duplex spelunca sepeliret, studui quadam compendiosa extractione sensum quem in ipsis libris (quibus vigilis! quo labore!) per annos viginti conceperam, stilo communi exprimere, prout sententia videbatur permittere, aliqua interserens dilucidationis gratia, non valde prolixa.

Porro ad exhauriendam sententiae profunditatem, postillas pro parte tractavi (vita comite diligentius completurus, ipso adspirante qui revelat profunda de tenebris) utcumque novae translationi principaliter innitens. Ultrum autem haec opuscula supervacua sint, an utilia, discernere poterit qui eadem cum textu librorum istorum et explanationibus eorumdem, sive Anastasii ad regem Carolum, sive aliis, diligenter contulerit; quamvis

arbitrer hujus doctrinae, et maxime Mystica theologiae medullas, mortalium neminem audiendo, legendo, studendo, percipere, nisi intus doceatur ab unctione. Nemo autem rideat donec perlegerit: quia ex omnium istorum librorum collatione sciet singulorum intelligentiam. In quibus omnibus per totum fulgent sapientiae radii de utroque Testamento per apostolum (nisi fallor) evulsi, sicut apparet per totam seriem. Coniunctim itaque semper legantur purus textus et ista extractio.⁴⁶

Gallus' preface makes clear that the Extractio was not conceived as a critical text of the Dionysian Corpus but was intended for use in conjunction with such a text. He makes specific reference to the "novae translationi" of Sarracenus, which was the basis for his own version, though it seems likely that he also consulted the Erigena translation and possibly drew on biblical concordances.⁴⁷ He did not use a Greek manuscript of the treatises - indeed, the evidence of his treatment of Greek terms and an admission in his commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy go to prove that he knew no more than the rudiments of the Greek language.⁴⁸ He readily acknowledges, moreover, the difficulties which he himself encountered in his reading of Ps.-Dionysius, both from the inherent complexities of the texts and from the style in which they were presented in the existing Latin Corpus. Interestingly, it is again the desire to produce an intelligible text, to publish what Gallus terms the hidden treasures of Dionysian theology, which instigates the new version of the Corpus; but in this instance, the end is achieved through intelligent selection from the complete texts, the incorporation of brief explanatory comments on their meaning, and by the adoption of the easily comprehensible "stilo communi". Gallus cultivates an altogether less abstract mode of expression in his Extractio than was characteristic of the earlier translations:⁴⁹ he wrote, as Walsh emphasizes, for the devoted rather than the highly educated,⁵⁰ and in this, as well as in his constant preoccupation with the contemplative life and with its most advanced

stages in particular, Walsh identifies traits which typify Gallus' writings as a whole.⁵¹ His works are, in fact, remarkable for their unity of theme and purpose, and his singling out of the De Mystica Theologia, the Dionysian treatise which bears most strongly on the theory of contemplation, in the preface to his Extractio, is representative of the importance which Gallus consistently attaches to the text.

The immediacy of Gallus' concern with the spiritual life, however, and his insistence on the super-rational character of unitive contemplation have often earned him the label "anti-intellectual". Thus, Théry;

... il n'existe aucune incertitude sur la pensée de Thomas Gallus: l'union à Dieu n'est possible qu'au delà des données rationnelles, et de nos conceptions intellectuelles. C'est là un point sur lequel l'abbé de Verceil ne cesse d'insister; et cette insistance nous révèle le fond de sa personnalité. Comme nous le verrons plus tard, c'est par son anti-intellectualisme affirmé avec force et sans arrêt, que Thomas Gallus étendra son influence sur le mouvement mystique du moyen âge.⁵²

Walsh is, nevertheless, surely right to stress that Gallus' convictions as to the super-rational character of mystic union do not constitute a total repudiation of the value of the human intellect, but rather set strict limits to its effectiveness in the sphere of unitive contemplation.⁵³

He writes:

It is true, of course, that he considers all knowledge as worthless compared with the heavenly wisdom which is the unitive knowledge of God, but he never decries secular learning in the round terms of, say, Richard of St. Victor. He will say, at the end of his treatise on the name of Jesus, 'Nos miseri innumeras scripturas et innumera percurrimus volumina, cum in uno nomine Jhesus totius religionis forma et totius sanctitatis norma scribatur;' (Oleum effusum super nomen tuum, cc192v2) and he will imply in his preface to the Explanation of the Angelic Hierarchy, that the less erudite in profane letters are better off in the long run, because they are more apt to take

for granted the limits of merely human investigation...
But this has always been the attitude of saintly scholars,
from Augustine to Pasteur; and of those who, with St. Paul,
realise that the foolishness of God is wiser than men.⁵⁴

Gallus' principal concern, indeed, is to elucidate the Dionysian texts
by accentuating their continuity with scriptural tradition. Walsh
again summarizes Gallus' approach to the Dionysian Corpus:

he sees Denis not as a neo-platonist, but as the disciple of
St. Paul; and he will make a point of saying that the Dionysian
corpus belongs to the unwritten tradition of the apostolic
doctrine: that wisdom of the profounder Scriptures which St.
Paul expounded to the perfect. This is the reason for Thomas'
extraordinary pre-occupation with the Canticle of Canticles;
traditionally, it treats of the contemplation of the perfect
- the supreme wisdom of Solomon. Hence he sees in the writings
of the Areopagite the apostolic theory of that loving union
between the Spouse and the contemplative soul, of which the
Canticle is the practical demonstration.⁵⁵

Thus, in the third of his commentaries on the Canticle, Gallus writes:

Theoricam huiusmodi superintellectualis sapientie scribit
(Dionysius), sicut possibile est scribi, in libello qui
scribitur de Mystic-Theologia. In hoc autem libro, scilicet
Cantica Canticorum, Salomon tradit practicam eiusdem Mistiche
Theologie, ut patet per totius libri seriem.⁵⁶

The frequent inclusion of biblical texts to expound or corroborate
passages of the Dionysian Corpus, which is characteristic of Gallus'
treatment of the texts, is thus motivated by a profound belief in the
intimacy of their relation to one another and their fundamental identity
of meaning.⁵⁷ It is this core of belief which, operating within the
freer form of "extractio" or "explanatio", makes of Gallus' synthesis
between the platonist heritage of Dionysian theology and the tradition
of Western Christianity something altogether more pervasive and con-
vincing than it was open to Sarracenus, in his restrictive role of
translator of the Corpus, to achieve.⁵⁸

Influence of Gallus on the Dionysian tradition on the continent and in England

It seems hardly surprising, therefore, in view of its conciseness, lucidity and readability, and its accommodation of the apparently alien facets of Dionysian ideology to received patterns of Christian belief, that Gallus' Extractio attained enormous and rapid popularity and, as was noted above, even usurped the function of formal translations of the Dionysian treatises. In authoritative manuscripts of the Latin Corpus which came out of the University of Paris in the thirteenth century, it is given equal prominence with the extensively glossed and commentated Vetus translatio of Erigena and Nova translatio of Sarracenus.⁵⁹ As regards the circulation of the remaining works of Gallus, M.T. D'Alverny, in an article entitled "Le Second Commentaire de Thomas Gallus Abbé de Verceil sur le Cantique des Cantiques", suggests that they were initially popular with the Franciscan order and subsequently gained ground in the Carthusian houses on the continent from the latter part of the fourteenth century.⁶⁰ Turning to the contemporary situation in England, D'Alverny confirms the importance of Gallus for the English author of the Cloud of Unknowing and adds:

Remarquons à ce propos que les bibliothèques anglaises sont relativement plus riches en manuscrits de Thomas Gallus que les françaises, où les explorations du P. Théry n'ont fourni jusqu'ici qu'une maigre récolte. La diffusion de ces ouvrages en Angleterre est sans doute en relation avec l'histoire temporelle de l'abbaye Saint-André de Verceil, que les liens étroits unissaient à l'abbaye de Chesterton au diocèse d'Ely. Le revenu des biens de ce dernier monastère avait en effet été accordé par le roi Henri au cardinal Guala Bicchieri, pour lui permettre de fonder en Italie du Nord un nouveau couvent de Victorins.⁶¹

Walsh discusses the question of Gallus' impact on English spirituality in greater detail. He claims a special reputation for Gallus in England from the middle of the thirteenth century, and reiterates

D'Alverny's contention that English libraries were well stocked with copies of his works. He goes on,

... we know that the London Charterhouse showed a special interest in the teaching of Vercellensis, linking it with that of the Cloud. In addition to all this, the Abbot of Vercelli had very close personal relations with England. He was the intimate friend of the Franciscan Adam Marsh, and of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln.⁶²

Walsh's association of Gallus' works with the English Carthusians interestingly reinforces D'Alverny's observations as to their popularity in Carthusian houses on the continent; his proposed connection between Gallus, the English Carthusians and the Cloud of Unknowing is, moreover, corroborated by a further circumstance which also puts them in close touch with the continental branch of the Carthusian order. The link is through Hugh of Balma, the thirteenth prior of the Charterhouse of Meyriat (1289-1304) and author of the influential mystical treatise known variously as the Viae Syon Lugent, the De Triplici Via and the De Mystica Theologia.⁶³ Balma's work depends heavily on Gallus, particularly in respect of its teaching on the super-rational character of mystic union. Théry writes,

... Hugues de Balma, qui cherche lui-même la base de son anti-intellectualisme dans les écrits dionysiens de Thomas Gallus. La seconde partie du De triplici via, véritable commentaire de la Théologie Mystique de Denys, s'inspire essentiellement de l'abbé de Verceil. De ce dernier, Hugues de Balma connaît l'Extractio, qu'il appelle ... 'tercia translacio'...

Même quand Hugues de Balma ne cite pas textuellement Thomas Gallus, on s'aperçoit qu'il a sous les yeux l'Extractio. Comme ce dernier, il dit 'forti conatu mentis', 'inspectrix divinae gratiae', et il lui emprunte bien d'autres expressions.⁶⁴

It seems, moreover, that the author of the Cloud was familiar with the Viae Syon Lugent, and indeed, an extract from Balma's text appears with the Cloud and the Book of Privy Counselling in MS Douce 262 (f.119^a, 'Exposicio Super Quedam Verba Libri Beati Dionisij De Mistica Theologia')

- the Dionysian manuscript produced at the London Charterhouse (f.1^a 'Liber domus Salutacionis matris dei prope londinium ordinis Carthusiensis') and annotated by James Grenehalgh. The implications of this for the Cloud of Unknowing will, however, be considered in detail in the course of this thesis.

Unquestionably, therefore, Thomas Gallus was largely instrumental in ensuring the assimilation of Dionysian theology into the mainstream of Christian tradition in the West - both at first hand and through other writers who absorbed and subsequently transmitted his influence. But it has to be stressed that before this fusion of what were in many respects alien philosophies could be effected, it was necessary for the Dionysian Corpus to undergo considerable transformation: it had to be latinized - a process which required not only its language but also its entire ideology to be forced into manifest conformity with Western religious literature. The elements of neoplatonist thought which featured in the Greek original had to be muted, and where there was room for doubt as to the strict Christian orthodoxy of what Pseudo-Dionysius wrote, the text was made to bear an unequivocally Christian interpretation and, in the later stages of the process, expounded in the light of biblical texts credited with identical meaning. It is certain, however, that by the end of the thirteenth century, a latin Corpus of Dionysian tracts which was intelligible and furnished with extensive and sophisticated critical apparatus had been made accessible to scholars in the West, and Dionysian theology was becoming widely received into medieval spirituality.

II. Deonise Hid Diuinite: a fourteenth century
English version of the De Mystica Theologia.

The method and characteristics of the translation and a survey of its general vocabulary

The grounds for assuming the Deonise Hid Diuinite to be the work of the fourteenth century writer of the Cloud of Unknowing seem unsailable and the ascription of the text to him has long gone unchallenged.⁶⁵ Its interest for the present thesis is therefore twofold. The question of authorship aside, it is of considerable importance in the first instance as marking the final phase in the transmission of Dionysian mystical theology and language from Greek, through Latin, to the English vernacular. And secondly, as a seminal text in the acknowledged Cloud Corpus, it is invaluable for what it reveals of the author's attitude to the theology which dominates his major work as well as to the two languages with which he deals in the process of translation.

On the first of these points it is possible to speak with some assurance, since the precise English equivalents of the Greek and Latin mystical terminology may be identified by means of parallel texts. This procedure, however, generates other problems which demand more tentative solutions, involving not only the author's attitude to his material and linguistic media but also some estimate of the verbal resources of English as compared with Latin at the date of the translation. Undoubtedly, Latin was still the universally accepted and therefore richer and more sophisticated vehicle for theology and philosophical discussion in the fourteenth century, and it is debatable how far the limitations of the English language determined the character of the vernacular translation and whether, indeed, they occasioned any modification to the substance of the original.

In considering these issues, it is impracticable to treat the Deonise Hid Diuinite as comprehensively here as Prof. Hodgson in her introduction to the text, nor has it been found necessary to challenge many of her general conclusions about the work. It has seemed advisable to confine attention to the key components of the Dionysian mystical vocabulary, making reference to the qualities of the translation as a whole only where they have a direct bearing on this particular aspect of the text. Some overlap with Prof. Hodgson's work is, of course, unavoidable, but the following reappraisal of certain elements of the diction of the Deonise Hid Diuinite seems warranted not only by its distinct focus but also by the publication of the Middle English Dictionary⁶⁶ (still uncompleted), which supplies additional relevant information unavailable to Prof. Hodgson.⁶⁷ It has not, however, been thought necessary to re-examine the extant manuscripts of the various Latin texts which the English translator drew on, and printed sources have therefore been used throughout.

The Latin sources of the Deonise Hid Diuinite are indicated in the translator's prologue to his text:

þis writyng þat next folowep is þe Inglische of a book þat Seynte Denys wrote vnto Thimothe, þe whiche is clepid in Latyn tonge Mistica Theologia. Of þe whiche book, for-þi þat it is mad minde in þe 70 chapter of a book wretin before (þe whiche is clepid þe Cloude of Vnknowing) how þat Denis sentence wol cleerli afferme al þat is wretyn in þat same book: þerfore, in translacioun of it, I haue not onliche folowed þe nakid lettre of þe text, bot for to declare þe hardnes of it, I haue moche folowed þe sentence of the Abbot of Seinte Victore, a noble & a worþi expositour of þis same book. (D.H.D. 2/3-12)

Prof. Hodgson agrees with an earlier editor of the Deonise Hid Diuinite, Dom Justin McCann, in interpreting these references to mean the translation of Sarracenus ("þe nakid lettre of þe text"), supplemented by

explanatory works by Thomas Gallus ("pe Abbot of Seinte Victor") - the Explanatio, the Gloss and, above all, the Extractio. The translator's use of his sources will be discussed in detail below, but what they reveal in general of his purpose in producing a vernacular text of the De Mystica Theologia is worthy of comment here. Clearly, he is much more in sympathy with Gallus than with the earlier translators of the Dionysian Corpus in so far as he sets aside the restraints of literal translation in order to compile a text which minimizes difficulty of meaning as well as of language. His intention, he stresses, is to provide a lucid and comprehensible text which will in turn be useful to its recipient in illuminating the theology of the Cloud of Unknowing. Thus, differing in method from some of his predecessors, the English author nevertheless concurs with them all in seeking to evolve a functional text of Ps.-Dionysius. To be functional, however, in the period up to and including the thirteenth century, the Dionysian Corpus had to be progressively latinized in order to accommodate a scholarly audience thoroughly conversant with Latin though scarcely familiar with Greek. The Deonise Hid Diuinite, on the contrary, unlike any of its antecedents, makes its appeal through its use of the vernacular. The explanation for this striking departure from tradition does not seem to lie in the non-availability of Latin texts of Ps.-Dionysius in England during the fourteenth century. It has already been noted that manuscripts reflecting the high degree of sophistication which the Latin Corpus had attained on the continent by the thirteenth century were undoubtedly current in England,⁶⁸ and it is to be presumed that Latin texts of Ps.-Dionysius and the accompanying extensive critical apparatus would have been accessible to the prospective audience of the Deonise Hid Diuinite as much as to its author. Perhaps, therefore, it was precisely because the English

text was not intended primarily for scholars that the use of the vernacular was indispensable in order to make Dionysian theology available in a form which would be intelligible to its reader.⁶⁹

The Deonise Hid Diuinite is an impressive achievement, remarkable not only for its fluency and competence as an autonomous piece of vernacular prose but also for the lucid account it gives of innately complex source material. Its comparative emancipation from the Latin texts on which it draws is apparent both in the flexibility with which it supplements and culls matter from its various sources as well as in the facility with which it seems in general to preserve the native idiom of English prose. Thus, in the following example, the translator adheres closely to the sense of his original whilst at the same time successfully adapting the Latin syntax and incorporating his own explanatory glosses on the difficulties of Ps.-Dionysius' trinitarian theology:

... how þe liztes of goodnes wonyng in þe herte borionid oute of þat immaterial, & þat only good in hymself & of hymself; & how þat in þis wonyng in hymself by onheed of substaunce, & in hemself by trinite of persones, & in hem togeders wip an euen euerlastyng borionyng, þei dwellyn stille vnpassyngliche.
(D.H.D. III, 7/17-21).

The Sarracenus text of the same passage reads,

quomodo ex immateriali et simplici bono in corde manentia bonitatis pullulaverunt lumina; et quomodo a mansione in ipso et in se ipsis et in se invicem coaeterna pullulatione permanserunt inaccessibilia. (Chev. pp 585-6).⁷⁰

His success is not, however, universal. In other instances his more slavish retention of Latin constructions is at odds with the English idiom and consequently produces cumbersome linguistic hybrids.

The Latin word "secundum", for example, as it occurs in such phrases as "secundum quantitatem descensus" (Sarracenus, Chev. p.590) and "ipsum cognoscunt secundum quod ipse est" (Extractio, Chev.p.712) is consistently rendered literally by the English translator as "after"; the English equivalents thus read, correctly but awkwardly, "after þe quantitee of descendyng" (8/16-17) and "knowen hym after þat he is" (10/11).

The second of these phrases, indeed, illustrates the difficulty of generalizing about the translator's treatment of the two languages with which he was concerned since, though it exactly reproduces the Latin syntax, its vocabulary is entirely English. In the matter of diction as with syntax, the text gives the overall impression of relying on predominantly native resources, though the translator shows no marked reluctance to extend his vocabulary by including Latinate terms. How far this effect may be traced to a conscious preference for the vernacular on the part of the translator or how far it merely reflects the range of vocabulary at his disposal is, however, open to question. It may therefore be useful to give brief consideration to the diction of the text as a whole before focussing attention on the mystical component of the vocabulary.

The M.E.D. is, of course, an asset to a linguistic survey of this kind, though evidence based entirely on its authority may in no sense be regarded as conclusive. In the first instance, it cannot be assumed to be either comprehensive or infallible;⁷¹ moreover, even if it were possible to date the Cloud Corpus with absolute certainty any more precisely than the second half of the fourteenth century, there can be no assurance that its author was familiar with

vocabulary which the M.E.D. records incidence of in the language prior to this period. With these reservations, however, it is nevertheless feasible to combine material from the M.E.D. with evidence drawn from the remaining treatises in the Cloud group in order to attempt an analysis of the vocabulary of the Deonise Hid Diuinite.⁷² There are, further, possible objections to the method of considering individual words in isolation from the larger sentence structures in which they occur and from the context of the translation as a whole. The danger of distorting the evidence cannot, perhaps, be entirely avoided in the present general survey of the vocabulary of the Deonise Hid Diuinite, but the drawbacks of the method have been compensated for, it is hoped, in the discussion of the translator's specifically mystical vocabulary which follows the table of parallel translations.

The diction of the English text may be divided into four broad categories. The first of these comprises those instances in which the translator seems to have opted for conspicuously vernacular vocabulary where obvious latinate alternatives, usually closer to the wording of his original, were almost certainly available to him.⁷³ To this category belong such examples as,

"clensid" (4/28)
(Lat. mundari)

O.E.D. records references to "purgation" and its derivatives (usually in Wicliffite texts) pre-1400.⁷⁴ There is no incidence of the word in the Cl. Corpus, where the usual term is "clense": e.g. Cl. 84/3, 94/10 & 11, 131/8; Ben.Min. 43/5, 14 & 15; Disc.Sp. 90/21. Disc.Sp. also has "wasschin away" (91/11) and in a similar context "schriue" (88/2 & 11, 89/11 etc.).

"euerlastyng" (2/14)
(Lat. aeternus)

The accepted equivalent of Lat. "aeternus" from 1225, but "eternal" is recorded quite frequently from the late fourteenth century (M.E.D. includes a variety of references from the Canterbury Tales).

- "licnes" (9/31)
(Lat. similitudo) O.E.D. includes numerous references to "similitude" pre-1400.
- "schorte" (4/17)
"schortyng" (8/14)
(Lat. brevis) M.E.D. records "bref" from the early fourteenth century, though "brefnes" is only cited from the early fifteenth. Cl. Corpus invariably has derivatives of "schort": e.g. Cl. 75/5, 17/15; P.P. 48/15. It is worth noting, however, that "schortyng" has the sense of "lack" rather than "brevity" in D.H.D. 8/14.
- "wisdom" (2/16)
(Lat. sapientia) O.E.D. has a variety of references to "sapience" pre-1400 (including Piers Plowman and the Prioress's Tale). "Sapienciam" is again translated "þis onyng wisdom" in P.C. 145/15-16.
- "þinges þat fallyn to" (9/13)
(Lat. accidentia) The English phrase circumvents the equivalent "accident", though (in the sense of "something that happens or occurs", "a fortuitous happening") M.E.D. records several pre-1400 occurrences of the word (e.g. Trevisa's Barth. and Chaucer's House of Fame). The Cloud author himself uses the word in Cl. 9/6, 93/1 & 2, but the reference in Disc.St. 64/11-12 to "tribulaciouns þat fallen to a soule" is closely comparable to this passage in D.H.D.
- The second category is also made up of vernacular elements in the vocabulary of the Deonise Hid Diuinite, but is distinguished from the first by the apparent lack of ready and unambiguous latinized alternatives already current in the English language. It includes,
- "beme" (3/17, 4/32)
(Lat. radium) The term is traditional in devotional contexts. O.E.D. cites only one pre-1400 incidence of "ray" (i.e. Pearl, 160), which would suggest that the word was known if not widely used in English at this date.
- "being þinges" (3/23 & 33)
(Lat. existentia) M.E.D. records "existence" only from the early fifteenth century (e.g. Lydgate's Troy Book).
- "eendes & teermes" (4/23)
(Lat. extremitas) "Extremitas" is rare in fourteenth century English and the M.E.D. only records it from very late in the period (i.e. two references to Gower's Confessio Amantis and one to Trevisa's Barth.).

"Faderheed" (7/16) (Lat. paternitas)	O.E.D. has no record of "paternity" before the fifteenth century.
"fer" (9/5) (Lat. remotissimus)	O.E.D. has no record of "remote" before the fifteenth century.
"flowyng" (9/19) (Lat. flux)	M.E.D. entry suggests that "flux" was only current as a medical term in the late fourteenth century.
"menes" (7/1 & 3, 9/30) (Lat. media)	"Media" is only recorded in a comparable sense from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.
"merk" (8/25 & 28) (Lat. designare)	M.E.D. contains few examples of "designate", and its earliest record is from Trevisa's <u>Barth.</u> (a 1398).
"maken streite" (8/11 & 20) (Lat. contrahitur)	M.E.D. records only the past participle form "contracted" (in the sense of "drawn up", "shrunken"), and this not before the mid fifteenth century.
"places" (7/32) cf. "stedlynes" (9/15) (Lat. localitas)	M.E.D. cites "local" only as a medical term in the fourteenth century. <u>Disc.Sp.</u> (85/3) has a reference to "þe sted of God".

The third and fourth categories cover the considerable latinate component in the diction of the Deonise Hid Diuinite. To the third belong those words which were possibly introduced into the vernacular by the translator of this text himself or at least made one of their earliest appearances in the language in his works. It includes:

"accordyng" (2/17 & 8/31) (8/31 Lat. congruentius)	The M.E.D.'s seven citations from the <u>Cl.</u> Corpus are among the earliest recorded occurrences of the word.
"formaciouns" (3/34) (Lat. formationes)	Not recorded in this sense in M.E.D.
"auoidyng" (5/22) (Lat. vacatione)	The gerundive form is rare. M.E.D. cites various Wicliffite references from the early fifteenth century, and most references to "auoiden" date from this period.
"enournements" (7/33) (Lat. ornatus)	Rare. The earliest recorded examples in M.E.D. are from the Wicliffite Bible of 1382.

"sensible" (6/21, 7/30, 9/17)
(7/30 & 9/17 Lat. sensibilus)
cf. "sensibilite" (9/15)
(Lat. sensuum tangibilitas)

O.E.D. records "sense" and its derivatives with a comparable significance only from the sixteenth century. It occurs relatively frequently, however, in the Cl. Corpus (e.g. Cl. 9/8, 16/17; P.C. 168/15 & 19, 169/1,6,10 & 15; P.P. 54/6). In D.H.D. 3/4-5, however, the translator renders "omnia sensibilia" as "alle þoo þinges, þe whiche mowe be knowen wip any of þi fyue bodely wittes withoutforþ", and "sensus" by "bodely wittes" in 3/2. The phrases "bodely wittes" and "goostly wittes" are, in fact, counterbalanced throughout this section of the text (3/1-9) which expands greatly on the Latin original, and are coupled elsewhere in the Cl. Corpus (e.g. P.C. 152/3-4). It may be that the translator's instinct for symmetry occasioned the use of "bodely wittes" first and foremost as a match for the phrase "goostly wittes" - the dependence on vernacular vocabulary in this case is essential to render the Latin expression "intellectuales operationes" intelligible. He may, on the other hand, have been sufficiently uncertain of the total comprehensibility of the word "sensible" to prefer the clarity of vernacular terms in a passage so fundamental to his mystical theology. It is notable that "operationes" is here translated "worchinges" (3/4), though the O.E.D. records "operation" in English from the late fourteenth century. "Worthing" seems, however, to be the normal term for the Cloud author: e.g. P.C. 145/3, 27 & 36.

The fourth category comprises the extensive body of latinate terminology, which, so far as it is possible to determine with any certainty, was apparently already current in English during the fourteenth century.⁷⁵ Many such terms formed a staple part of the vocabulary of contemporary religious prose:

"affecyoun" (2/26)
(Lat. affectionem)

M.E.D.'s many citations of this word in a devotional context include examples from Rolle and Hilton. It occurs frequently in the Cl. Corpus: e.g. P.P. 54/6, 59/1 etc.

- "assoilid" (5/11)
(Lat. absolvitur) M.E.D. records from c1275.
- "borionid" (7/18)
(Lat. pullulaverunt) M.E.D. records from 1350. Most of the citations are taken from devotional texts, and many from Wicliffite writings.
- "cleertes" (2/24)
(Lat. claritatibus) M.E.D. records from 1330.
- "concupisence" (9/16)
(Lat. concupiscentiae) Recorded from the second half of the fourteenth century (including one citation from Hilton's Of Angels' Song).
- "contemplacioun" (5/4)
(Lat. contemplatur) Current from 1230. M.E.D. includes references from Ancrene Wisse, Rolle's English Psalter, Parson's Tale.
- "contricyon" (3/1)
(Lat. contritione) M.E.D. records from 1350 (e.g. Parson's Tale, Cursor Mundi, Pearl). It also occurs in Cl. 32/2.
- "enditing" (8/15)
(Lat. sermo) Recorded from the late fourteenth century (e.g. Wicliffite Bible of 1382, Canterbury Tales - Retraction).
- "experience" (5/20) In common usage from the late fourteenth century. It appears elsewhere in the Cl. Corpus: Cl. 35/2; P.C. 170/8 & 14; Disc. St. 64/6, 68/20, 76/6.
- "fantastik ymaginatiue"
(3/35) Both words are recorded, often in conjunction with one another, from the late fourteenth century (e.g. Knight's Tale, Trevisa's Barth). "Fantasie" and "ymaginacioun" occur together in Cl. 22/16-17.
- "figures" (3/32)
(Lat. figurant) In common usage from the late fourteenth century. "Figured" occurs in Cl. 12/13. "Figura", however, is rendered by the vernacular "schap" in D.H.D. 9/14.
- "frenesiees" (7/33)
(Lat. furores) Relatively common from the late fourteenth century. M.E.D. citations again include Hilton's Of Angels' Song. The word also occurs in Cl. 23/7 and 49/17, where it relates to the experiences of false contemplatives.
- "inspirid" (2/19) The word is recorded in this sense from the late fourteenth century - usually associated with the Scriptures.
- "multitude" (4/33)
(Lat. multis (Sarracenus)
multitudione (Extractio)) The many fourteenth century references include Rolle's English Psalter and the Wicliffite Bible of 1382. It also occurs in Ben. Min. 45/8 .

"presence" (5/9)
(Lat. praesentia)

Fourteenth century references include Rolle's English Psalter and the Ayenbite of Inwite. It also occurs in P.P. 54/6.

"subieccioun" (5/7)
(Lat. subjectas)

Fourteenth century references include the Pricke of Conscience, Trevisa's Barth, and the Wicliffite Bible.

"temporal" (9/19)
(Lat. temporalem)

Recorded from late fourteenth century, e.g. in Wiclif's works. It is noteworthy, however, that the text of D.H.D. includes the explanatory gloss "bi proces of tymes", which suggests that the translator may have doubted its universal comprehensibility. He uses a similar device in P.C. 135/18-19 '... mental wipinne enditid bi pouzt or vocale wipouten by pronounsyng of worde".

It seems appropriate at this point to restate Prof. Hodgson's general observations concerning the vocabulary of the Cloud Corpus:

... these treatises, too, are part of the great intellectual and literary activity which produced the poetry of Chaucer, Langland, and Gower, the theological work of Wyclif, and the Wycliffite translations of the Bible. Like them, these treatises introduce late Latin or late French forms (e.g. "formaciouns", "passibilite"), and enrich the language with borrowings of abstract terms of philosophy and theology...

It seems certain that the author of these treatises was using a language fresh and up to date. Like his great contemporaries, however, he made good use of the terms which the heritage of vernacular devotional literature richly provided.⁷⁶

As Prof. Hodgson's introduction to the Deonise Hid Diuinite insists, the translator clearly exploits to the full the resources and characteristic assets of the English language, both in terms of its capacity for absorbing foreign vocabulary and also by capitalising on native methods of increasing the word-stock by compounding and by utilizing prefixes and suffixes. The considerable latinate component of the vocabulary demonstrates, moreover, that chauvinism had no part in his respect for the vernacular and that, if the translation was directed at an audience unfamiliar with Latin, it was certainly not intended for the ignorant or simple minded. Here the foregoing categorization of the vocabulary

of the Deonise Hid Diuinite, though necessarily tentative and in some respects arbitrary, nevertheless serves as a useful guide to the translator's attitude to the two languages with which he worked. While he was undoubtedly not shy of introducing new words into the language where occasion demanded, it also appears that the majority of his latinate diction was already to some extent current in the religious literature of the period and that, where the use of latinate terminology promised to be a source of ambiguity, he was ready to anticipate the difficulty by incorporating an English gloss on the term (as in the case of "temporal" (9/19)) or by paraphrasing the text of his original (e.g. 3/1-9, 9/13). Similarly, he frequently opts for totally vernacular vocabulary where an obvious latinate alternative was available to him, and often rejects the convenient method of supplying the deficiencies of English by anglicizing the vocabulary of his Latin sources. Indeed, he seems to prefer even awkward vernacular expressions to imported terms which might have enhanced the grace and fluency of his translation while impeding its sense: e.g. his consistent translation of "existentia" by "being pinges", and his rendering of "contrahitur" (8/11 & 20) by "maken streit" . Intelligibility seems in all things to have governed his practice as a translator.

It is in this context that the author's handling of the mystical vocabulary of the De Mystica Theologia must be appreciated, since while this specialised terminology inevitably made unique demands on the language into which he was translating, it is nevertheless subject to the same conditions relative to the resources of English and the attitude of the translator as the text as a whole. In the following discussion, the vocabulary which merits particular attention will be

introduced in tabular form for ease of reference and important points will then be isolated for detailed comment. The mystical terminology of the Deonise Hid Diuinite has been classified according to individual words or by diverse expressions of a single idea as appropriate to the circumstances. In some cases, where a technical term of the Latin sources is avoided by the English translator, the various ways in which it is rendered have been grouped under one heading. Important instances in which the translator either omits material from his sources or modifies it significantly have also been recorded.

The mystical vocabulary of the Deonise Hid Diuinite and its sources.

Abouen mynde

3/16-17 þou schalt be drawn up abouen mynde in affeccion

S. 569 sursum ageris

Ex. 569 sursumageris

(cf. Gloss 272B "elevaberis", but there appears to be some conflation with 272A "consurge per principalem affectionem ad Dei unitionem", which corresponds to 3/10)

ἀναχθήσῃ⁷⁷

5/10-11 and setteþ hym abouen þe natureel teermes of hymself

S. 576-7 intelligibilibus summitatibus sanctissimorum locorum ejus superveniens

ταῖς νοηταῖς ἀκρότησι τῶν αἰωμάτων αὐτοῦ τόπων ἐπιβάτευσσα

5/24 knowyng abouen mynde

S. 578 super mentem cognoscens

Ex. 578 super intellectum et mentem

ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσκων

8/12-13 (þe derknes þat is) abouen mynde

S. 589 (caliginem quae est) super mentem

Ex. 589-90 (tractamus de divina incomprehensibilitate quae est) super mentem

(τὸν) ὑπὲρ νοῦν(... γνόφον)

Occurs in interpolations in 2/25, 2/25-6 "wiþ affecyon abouen mynde" (though introductory summary to Gloss 269B contains "uniri Deo per superintellectuaalem cognitionem et affectionem sui"), 4/3, 6/28.

Affirmation

4/1 sette

S. 571 ponere

Ex. 571 attribuunt (which also covers 'afferme' in 4/2)

τιθέναι

10/17 set
S. & Ex. 601 ponimus
τίθεμεν

10/16 (affermingly) set
S. 601 positiones facientes
Ex. 601 ponimus
Interpolation of 'affermingly' possibly by analogy with
10/16 "deniingly do away"
τὰς θέσεις... ποιοῦντες.

8/27 set
S. 592 affirmationem ... ponere
Ex. 592 attribuamus
κατάφασιν ... τιθέναι

6/34 setting oure affermynges
S. 581 ponebamus
Ex. 581 positione
(cf. Gloss 277A "affirmatione vel positione")
ἐτιθεμεν

4/2 settinges
S. 571 positiones
θέσεις

8/25 setting
S. 592 ponentes
Ex. 592 positionem
θέσιν cf. 8/26, 10/15 & 10/21, in which S.
also has "positio".

7/14 set wiþ preisyng
S. 584 maxime propria affirmativae theologiae laudavimus... dicitur
Ex. 584 maxime usi sumus affirmationibus sive positionibus in
laudibus divinis
(cf. Gloss 278A "maxime affirmationibus usi sumus, sive positionibus
in divinis laudibus")
τὰ κυριώτατα τῆς καταφατικῆς θεολογίας ὑμνήσαμεν...λέγεται

4/2 afferme
S. 571 affirmare
καταφάσκειν

4/8 affermynges
S. & Ex. 571 affirmationibus
καταφάσεσιν cf. 7/10 & 7/12

6/33 afferminges
S. 581 positiones
Ex. 581 affirmationem
θέσεσιν cf. 4/11

8/22-3 affirmatyue deuinitee
S. 591 ponentes divinas positiones
Ex. 591 positiones
θέμενοι τὰς θείας θέσεις

7/24 affermyngliche preisid
S. 586 hypotyposibus laudantur
ὑποτυπώσεις ὑμνῆται

Interpolations in 7/25-6 ("affermyngliche set & preisid") and 7/29 ("affermyngliche set wiþ preising") by analogy with surrounding passages. "Afferme" and "affermyng" also occur in two expanded passages where they are coupled with "denie" (10/18-19 and 10/22). Note that "affirme" also occurs in the sense of "confirm" in 2/8

Derk

2/19 derke inspirid spekynges
S. 565 mysticorum eloquiorum
Ex. 566 profunda mysteria Scripturarum
μυστικῶν λογίων

2/22 derkyst
S. 566 in obscurissimo
Ex. 566 in summa invisibilitate
σκοτεινοτάτῳ

2/20 derknes
S. & Ex. 566 caliginem
γνόφον

3/17 derknes
S. 568 ad supersubstantialem divinarum tenebrarum radium
Ex. 569 ad supersubstantialem radium divinae incomprehensibilitatis
πρὸς τὴν ὑπερούσιον τοῦ θεοῦ σκότους ἀκτῖνα

3/24 derknes
S. & Ex. 570 tenebras
σκότος

4/25 derknes
S. & Ex. 574 caliginem
γνόφον

5/17-18 þe derknes of vnknowyng, þe whiche derknes is vereliche hid
S. 577 ad caliginem ignorantiae intrat, quae caligo vere est mystica
Ex. 577 et intrat ad caliginem ignorantiae, id est, unitur
incomprehensibilitati divinae quam non penetrat intelligentia
εἰς τὸν γνόφον τῆς ἀγνωσίας εἰσδύνει τὸν ὄντως μυστικόν

5/27 derknes
S. & Ex. 579 caligine
γνόφον

7/7 derknes
S. 582 & Ex. 583 caliginem
γνόφον

8/12-13 (entren into) þe derknes (þat is abouen mynde)
S. 589-90 caliginem (quae est super mentem introeuntes)
Ex. 589-90 (ubi tractamus de divina incomprehensibilitate quae est
super mentem)
(εἰς τὸν ὑπὲρ νοῦν εἰσδύνοντες) γνόφον

10/14 derknes
S. 600 tenebrae
Ex. 600 tenebrae (a lumine deficientes)
σκότος

Excess

S. 568 excessu tui ipsius
Ex. 568 te ipsum et omnia per mentis excessum nullo inferiori
retinaculo praepeditus transcenderis
τῆ ... ἑαυτοῦ ... ἐκστᾶσει
3/13 þe ouerpassyng of þiself

Ex. 601 excessus ipsius
S. 601 excessus
ἡ ὑπεροχῆ
10/21-22 his not-vnderstondable ouerpassyng

Ex. 570 excedunt
S. 570 super istos sunt
ὑπὲρ τούτους εἰσὶν
3/26 ben abouen

Ex. 572 excedit
S. 571-2 super (privationes) esse
ὑπὲρ (τὰς στερήσεις) εἶναι
4/9 be abouen

Ex. 573 qui per mentis excessum
S. 573 transeunt
διαβαίνουσι
4/21 þe which passen abouen

Ex. 576 excedit
S. 576 excedenti
ὑπερέχοντι
5/7 passyng abouen
S. 594 & 597. Headings to Chs. IV & V include "secundum excessum"
καθ' ὑπεροχῆν). Omitted from D.H.D.

The following examples from Ex. are omitted from D.H.D.:

Ch. II (corresponds to D.H.D. 5/27-29)

"In hac superlucenti caligine precamur nos constitui et per mentis
excessum (ubi intellectus neque videt neque aliquo modo cognoscit)
superintellectualiter cognoscere Deum per intellectualis cognitionis
remotionem..." (579)

Ch. III (corresponds to D.H.D. 8/12-15)

"Unde et in praesenti libro (ubi tractamus de divina incomprehensib-
ilitate quae est super mentem) incurremus non solum brevitatem verborum
sed et perfectam irrationabilitatem et imprudentiam, id est rationis
et prudentiae incomparabilem excessum". (589-90)

Ch. III (corresponds to D.H.D. 8/17-21)

"hic autem ab inferioribus ad superiora conscendens, secundum mensuram
ascensionis contrahitur, et cum ad mentis excessum peruentum fuerit,
tunc deficit omnino sermo et mentis et corporis, neque restat menti
nisi uniri Verbo ineffabili et aeterno". (591)

Note, however, the comparable phrase in D.H.D. 4/15-16:
in þis he was rauischid to beholde abouen kynde
S. 572 illud supernaturaliter intendens
Ex. 572 idem Apostolus supernaturaliter intendit
ἐκεῖνο ὑπερφῶς εννοήσας

Hid, Privy (otherwise than as 'Mystical')

S. 566 cooperta sunt secundum supersplendentem occulte docti
silentii caliginem

Ex. 566 clausa et abscondita

(cf. Gloss 270C "clausae et absconditae": the introductory summary
also includes 269B "clausa vel occulta").

κατὰ τὸν ὑπέρφωτον ἐγκεκάλυπται τῆς κρυφιομύστου σιγῆς γνόφον
2/20 kouerid and hid

2/22 priuely

Interpolation

2/29 hid deuinite

Interpolation

6/23, 6/27 hid

Both occur in lengthy Ch. II expansion. No very precise equivalents
in the Latin versions, though S. includes 580 "occulti" (κρυφίου)
and 581 "occultam" (ἀποκεκρυμμένον). Ex. 581 refers to removal of
material "quae occultant et cooperiunt et videri prohibent illam
puram imaginem", which will reveal the image "quae prius latebat
in occulto" (cf. Gloss 276B-C. Both passages are close to 6/23).

7/7-8 priueliche hid

S. 583 & Ex. 583-4 occultatam

ἀποκρυπτόμενον

Know, Understand

3/3-4 vnderstondable worchinges

S. & Ex. 567 intellectuales operationes

τὰς νοερὰς ἐνεργείας

3/4-5 þe whiche mowe be knowen wiþ any of þi fyue bodely wittes
without-forþe

S. & Ex. 567 omnia sensibilia

πάντα αἰσθητὰ

3/6 þe whiche mow be knowen by þi goostly wittes wiþinne-forþ

S. 567 & Ex. 568 intelligibilia

νοητὰ

3/10 vnderstonde

S. 568 sicut est possibile

Ex. 568 sicut est tibi possibile

ὡς ἐφικτόν

3/11 in a maner þat is þou woste neuer how

S. & Ex. 568 ignote

ἀγνώστως

3/12 abouen ... al maner knowyng
S. & Ex. 568 super omnem ... cognitionem
ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ... γνῶσιν

3/15-16 al þing þat may be knowen by þe propre fourme in þi
knowyng
Interpolated expansion

3/21 knowing ... knowable
Interpolation not in S., but corresponding to Ex. 569 "eos qui
secundum philosophiam mundanam cognitioni existentium ad obtinendam
Dei cognitionem et veram sapientiam firmiter innituntur".

3/24 knowen
S. 569 scire
εἰδέναι

3/25 knowyng whiche is after hemself.
S. 569 secundum ipsos est cognitiōe
τῇ καθ' αὐτοὺς γνῶσει

3/31 knowing
Corresponds Ex. 570 figurant

4/3 þat is abouen al knowyng
Interpolated expansion

4/18 vnderstondyng
S. 573 intellectum
Ex. 573 intellectu
νόησιν

5/2 vnderstondyng
Interpolated expansion

5/9 þinkyng
S. 576 cogitationem
ἐπίνοιαν

5/10 vnderstondynges
S. 576 intelligibilibus
ταῖς νοηταῖς

5/12 vnderstondable worching miztes
Corresponds Ex. 577 speculativae intelligibiles

5/18 al knowable knowing
S. 577 in qua claudit omnes cognitivas susceptiones
Ex. 577 omnes comprehensivas cognitiones
καθ' ὅν ἀπομυεῖ πᾶσας τὰς γνωστικὰς ἀντιλήψεις.

5/20-21 not hauyng felyng ne þinkyng of no beyng þing
S. 578 omnino autem ignoto
Ex. 577-8 ab omnibus (et quasi a se ipso) segregatur
τῷ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγνώστῳ

5/22 in auoidyng of al knowyng
S. 578 vacacione omnis cognitionis
Ex. 578 intellectualiter ignoto
τῆς πάσης γνώσεως ἀνεπεργησία

5/23-4 knoweþ noþing
S. 578 eo quod nihil cognoscit
Ex. 578 eo quod intellectualem cognitionem derelinquit
τῷ μηδὲν γινώσκειν

5/24 knowyng abouen mynde
S. 578 super mentem cognoscens
Ex. 578 super intellectum et mentem Deum cognoscit
ὑπερ νοῦν γινώσκων

5/28 knowe
S. 579 cognoscere
γινῶναι

5/29 knowyng
S. 579 cognitionem
γινῶσιν

6/3 wost; 6/10 & 18 vnderstondyng; 6/30 in a maner
þat is vnknowen how vnto alle
Expansions

7/5 knowe þat vnknowyng
S. 582 cognoscamus illam ignorantiam
Ex. 582 cognoscamus divinam incomprehensibilitatem
γινῶμεν ἐκείνην τὴν ἀγνωσίαν

7/6 knowable miztes
S. 582 omnibus noscibilibus
Ex. 582 quae possunt dici vel cogitari
τῆν ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν γνωστῶν

7/27-8 vnderstondable (namynges of God)
S. 587 alia intelligibilis (sunt Deinominationis)
Ex. 587 aliis intelligibilibus (Dei nominationibus)
τῆς νοητῆς (ἔστι θεωνυμίας)

8/11-12 vnderstondyng
S. 589 intelligibilium
τῶν νοητῶν

8/25 vnderstondable þinges; 8/26 alle vnderstondyng
8/29 vnderstondable
Explanatory interpolations

8/34 (repeated in 8/35) vnderstondyng
S. 593 intelligitur
Ex. 594 intelligi
νοεῖται

9/11 lacken... vnderstondyng

S. 594 sine mente

Ex. 594 carens ... mente

ἀνοῦς

9/12 vnderstonding

Ex. 594 intelligunt

9/23 vnderstondable

S. 597 intelligibilium

(cf. Gloss 281B)

τῶν νοητῶν

9/26 vnderstondable

Interpolation

9/28 vnderstondyng... vnderstonding

S. 597 & Ex. 597-8 intellectum... intellectus

νόησιν ... νόησις

9/29 vnderstonden

S. & Ex. 598 intelligitur

νοεῖται

10/5 vnderstondable

S. 599 intelligibilis

Ex. 599 intelligibiliter

νοητῆ

10/6 kunnyng

S. & Ex. 599 scientia

ἐπιστήμη

10/7 vnderstonde

S. 599 videmus

Ex. 599 intelligimus

εἰδέναι

10/8 knowen of us

S. 599 & Ex. 600 cognitum a nobis

τῶν ἡμῶν ... συνεγνωσμένων

10/10 knowen

Corresponds S. & Ex. 600 existentia

ὄντα

10/11 knowen

S. & Ex. 600 cognoscunt

γινώσκει

10/11 knowip

S. & Ex. 600 cognoscit

γινώσκει

10/13 vnderstondyng

S. 600 ratio ipsius

Ex. 600 rationalis investigatio

λόγος αὐτῆς

10/14 knowyng
S. & Ex. 600 cognito
γνώσις

10/18 vnderstondable; 10/21 not-vnderstondable;
10/22 vn-vnderstondably
Explanatory interpolations.

Mystical, Mystery

Title Deonise Hid Diuinite
S. 565 De Mystica Theologia
τῆς ὁ θεῖος γνώφος

2/19 derke inspirid spekynges
S. 565 mysticorum eloquiorum
Ex. 566 profunda mysteria Scripturarum (Approximates to both e.g.'s
μυστικῶν λογίων in 2/19)

2/19 pryue þinges of deuinytee
S. 566 theologiae mysteria
τῆς θεολογίας μυστήρια

2/32 blynde beholdynges
S. 567 mysticas visiones
Ex. 567 mysticarum contemplationum
τὰ μυστικὰ θεάματα

3/26 þe godliche techynges of þees priuetees
S. 570 divinae doctrinae misteriorum
αἱ θεῖαι μυσταγωγίαι

5/17-18 þe whiche derknes is vereliche hid
S. 577 quae caligo vere est mystica
Ex. 577 id est, unitur incomprehensibilitati divinae quam non
penetrat intelligentia: quae vere est omnium clausiva et in se
claudit et secretissime celat omnes comprehensivas cognitiones,
tamquam in prima omnium causa
γνώφον... τὸν ὄντως μυστικόν

7/5-6 þe whiche is wallid aboute from al knowable miȝtes in alle
þees being þinges
S. 582 ab omnibus noscibilibus in omnibus existentibus circumvelatam
Ex. 582 cognoscamus divinam incomprehensibilitatem latentem sub
mysticis velis omnium existentium quae possunt dici vel cogitari
τὴν ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν γνωστῶν ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς οὐσι περικεκαλυμμένην

Negation

4/5 denye
S. 571 negare
Ex. 571 remouent
ἀποφάσκειν

4/7 deniinges
S. & Ex. 571 negationes
τὰς ἀποφάσεις

6/33 deniinges
S. 581 ablationes
Ex. 582 ablationem
τὰς ἀφαιρέσεις

9/25-6 oure deniinges & oure doinges away
Ex. 597 negationes

7/10 deniing (adj)
S. 584 negativae
ἀποφατικάι

10/2 denyinges
Ex. 598 negationes

10/16 deniingly do away
S. 601 ablationes facientes
Ex. 601 negando auferimus
ἀφαιρέσεις ποιοῦντες

7/2 repeats "deniinges" from 6/33 in an expanded phrase.
10/19 interpolates "denie", coupled with "afferme". The section from
6/32-7/8 also balances "deniinges" and "afferminges".
In 10/23, "deniinge" possibly corresponds to Ex. 602 "absoluti".

4/11 doying away
S. 572 ablationem
Ex. 572 negatione
ἀφαίρεσιν

8/29 doying away
S. 592 auferentes
Ex. 592 ablationem
ἀφαιροῦντας

10/21 doying away
S. & Ex. 601 ablationem
ἀφαίρεσιν cf. 5/30 & 10/16

4/9 doying away (of pees beyng or beable pinges)
S. 571 privationes
Ex. 572 negationem
τὰς στερήσεις

7/4-5 do away
S. & Ex. 582 auferimus
ἀφαιροῦμεν cf. 8/30, 10/18

8/33 do away
Ex. 593 removetur

"Do away" occurs in various interpolations: 2/29-30, 3/18, 5/32, 6/27-8.

9/4 put away
Ex. 594 auferimus

9/13 remowe
Ex. 594 removemus

8/23-4 negatyue (deuinitee)
S. 591 divinam ablationem
Ex. 591 ablationes
τῆς θείας ἀφαιρέσεως

3/1 forsake
S. & Ex. 567 derelinque
ἀπόλειπε cf. 4/24

5/22 auoidyng
S. 578 vacatione
Ex. 578 intellectualiter ignoto
ἀνεργησία

The lengthy expansion in Ch. II includes "voide away" 6/8;
"pare away" 6/26; "doyng away" 6/27-8. The equivalent passage in
S. 580-581 includes "auferentes" (ἐξαίρουσιν) and "ablatione"
(ἀφαιρέσει); Ex. 580-581 includes "auferunt (exteriores partes)"
and "ablationem"; Gloss 276B includes "removent (exteriores partes
materiae grossiores", which seems to correspond to 6/8 "voide away
alle þe outward partyes"; "pare away" seems to be original.

Negative vocabulary

2/14 vnbigonne
Interpolation

2/23 inuisible
S. 566 invisibili
ἀοράτω

"invisibilitate" occurs in Ex. 566 in
this context, but the precise equivalent
is the expansion in Ex. 567 "ubi neque
ratio investigando palpat neque intell-
igentia contemplando considerat".

2/23 vngropable
S. 566 impalpabili
ἀναφεί

3/19 vnwise
S. & Ex. 569 indoctorum
ἀμυήτων

cf. 3/27

4/21 vnclene
S. 573 immunda
ἐναγῆ

5/19 inuisible
S. 577 invisibili
ἀοράτω

Ex. 577 neque ratio investigat
neque intellectus speculatur

5/19 vngropable
S. 577 non-palpabili
ἀναφεί

6/13 (nakyd), vnmaad, & vnbigonne kynde
Interpolations cf. 6/29

6/20 vnnoumerable
Interpolation cf. 6/25

7/18 inmaterial
S. & Ex. 585 immateriali
ἀύλου

7/21 vnpassyngliche
S. 586 inegressibilia
ἀνεκφοίτητα

8/14 vnresonabiltee
S. & Ex. 590 irrationabilitatem
ἀλογίαν

8/21 vnspekable
S. & Ex. 591 ineffabili
ἀφθέγκτω

9/16 inordynacioun
S. & Ex. 595 inordinationem
ἀταξίαν

9/17 vnmiztfulnes
S. 595 neque impotens est
Ex. 595 invaletudinem
οὔτε ἀδύναμός ἐστιν

9/31 (ne licnes), ne vnlicnes
S. & Ex. 598 (neque similitudo) neque dissimilitudo
(οὔτε ὁμοιότης) ἢ ἀνομοιότης

10/20 wiþoutyn comparison; 10/21 not-vnderstondable;

10/22 vn-vnderstondabely
Explanatory expansions

Ex. makes extensive use of negative terminology in its expansions on the text of the original, and especially in its first chapter. D.H.D. does not imitate this.

e.g. Ch. I includes	incomprehensibiliter	566,570
	invariabilia	566
	inaccessibilem	566
	inaudibiliter	566
	invisibilitate	566
	incomprehensibilitate	566
	incomprehensibilitatis	569
	incomprehensibilitatem	570
	incomparabiliter	572
	incomprehensibilitati	574,577
	invisibilis	575

Some negative forms from the Greek original, constructed on the traditional model of stem with negating prefix, had already been superseded in the Latin versions of the text and the English translation retains these later forms:

e.g. 8/21 withouten voice
S. 591 sine voce
Ex. 591 deficit omnino sermo
ἀφωνος

9/4 withoutyn substaunce
S. 594 sine substantia
Ex. 594 non substantiatum
ἀνούσιός

D.H.D. in some instances omits negative terms preserved in its sources:

1. Omits S. 566 ubi simplicia et absoluta et inconvertibilia
theologiae mysteria (Corresponds 2/19)
τὰ ἀπλᾶ καὶ ἀπόλυτα καὶ ἄτρεπτα τῆς θεολογίας μυστήρια
2. S. 568 ignote
ἀγνώστως
3/11 in a maner þat is þou woste neuer how
3. S. 568 (Etenim excessu tui ipsius et omnium) irretentibili et
absoluto munde
... ἀσχέτω καὶ ἀπολύτω
3/12-18 Expanded omitting negatives
4. S. 570 impias
ἀθέων
3/34 wickyd
5. S. 575 (invisibilis est enim)
(ἀθεάτος γάρ)
5/5 for he may not be seen by þat iʒe
6. S. 578 omnino autem ignoto
τῷ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγνώστῳ
5/20-21 not hauyng felyng ne þinkyng of no beyng þing
7. S. 579 per non-videre et per ignorare
καὶ δι' ἀβλεψίας καὶ ἀγνωσίας
5/27-28 bi nouzt seeyng & vnknowyng
8. S. & Ex. 590 imprudentiam
ἀνοησίαν
8/14 madnes
9. S. 594 Ch. IV neque sine substantia est neque sine vita,
neque sine ratione neque sine mente ...
οὔτε ἀνούσιός ἐστιν οὔτε ἄζωος, οὔτε ἄλογος οὔτε ἄνοος ...
Note that the English translator prefers to follow the less
repetitively negative version of Gallus in this chapter.

Souereyn

2/15 souereyn - substancyal
S. & Ex. 565 supersubstantialis
ὑπερούσιε cf. 3/17, 5/31, 7/7, 7/22

3/22-3 souereyn - substancyaly
S. & Ex. 569 supersubstantialiter
ὑπερουσίως cf. 4/19, 5/30

2/15 souereyn Goddesse
S. & Ex. 565 superdea
ὑπέρθεε

2/16 souereyn Good
S. & Ex. 565 superbona
ὑπεράγαθε

2/18 souereyn-vnknowen
S. 565 superignotum
Ex. 565 superignotus
ὑπεράγνωστον

2/18 souereyn-schinyng
S. 565 supersplendentem
Ex. 565 supersplendens
ὑπερφαῖ

cf. 2/20, though the Greek has ὑπέρφωτον

5/27 souereyn-schining
S. & Ex. 579 superlucenti
ὑπέρφωτον

2/21 souereyn-clerest
S. & Ex. 566 superclarissimum
ὑπερφανεστάτον

2/21 souereynly (for to schine)
S. & Ex. 566 supersplendere
ὑπερλάμποντα

2/23 souereynli (fulfillyng)
S. 567 superimplentem
Ex. 567 et desursum superinfluentem mentibus superintellectualiter
unitis superpulchras claritates
ὑπερπληροῦντα

3/31 souereynliche (set abouen)
S. 570 superpositam
Ex. 570 superposita
ὑπερκειμένην

4/5 souereinly (beyng abouen)
S. & Ex. 571 superexistente
ὑπερούση

5/10 souereynly
Interpolation

Omissions of Latin "super-" vocabulary

4/19 set abouen
S. & Ex. 573 superposita
ὑπερκειμένην

2/23-4 ful fayre cleertees
S. 567 superpulchris claritatibus
Ex. See above (2/23)
τῶν ὑπερκάλων ἀγλαΐων

4/15 in þis he was rauischid to beholde abouen kynde
S. 572 illud supernaturaliter intendens
Ex. 572 idem Apostolus supernaturaliter intendit
ἐκεῖνο ὑπερφύως ἐννοήσας

4/22 comyn abouen
S. 573 superveniunt
Ex. 573 superant
ὑπερβαίνουσι

5/10-11 setteþ hym abouen
S. 577 superveniens
ἐπιβάτεύουσα

Symbolic

7/28-9 þe Gadering of Deuine Sentence
S. & Ex. 587 symbolica ... theologia
τῆ συμβολικῆ θεολογία cf. 8/8-9

8/3-4 & what oþer sensible formes þat on any maner in Holy
Scripture ben applied vnto God.
S. 588 et quaecumque aliae sanctae formationes compositae
sunt symbolicae Deiformationes
Ex. 588 et sic de aliis compositis formationibus Deo
attributis in libro de Symbolica theologia
καὶ ὅσαι ἄλλαι τῆς συμβολικῆς εἰσι θεοτυπίας ἱερόπλαστοι μορφώσεις.

Gallus' account of the symbolic value of Scripture is omitted from
the first paragraph of D.H.D., Ch. I:
Ex. 565-6 "in quo Verbo profunda mysteria Scripturarum aeternaliter
et incomprehensibiliter sunt clausa et abscondita et in arce
simplicissima coarctata et a verborum sive symbolorum involucris
absoluta et omnino invariabilia".

Theology

Title Deonise Hid Diuinite
S. 565 De Mystica Theologia
τίς ὁ θεῖος γνῶσις

2/19-20 alle þe pryue þinges of deuinytee
S. 566 theologiae mysteria
Ex. 566 profunda mysteria Scripturarum
τῆς θεολογίας μυστήρια

4/13-14 Cristes deuinitee, it is boþe moche and it is leest
S. 572 et multam theologiam esse et minimam
Ex. 572 Theologiam et prolixam esse et coarctatam
καὶ πολλὴν θεολογίαν εἶναι καὶ ἐλαχίστην

7/10 Whiche bookes ben of aferming & whiche of dening diuinitee
S. 584 Quae sunt affirmativae theologiae, quae negativae
τίνες οἱ καταφατικαὶ θεολογίαι, τίνες αἱ ἀποφατικαὶ

7/11 bookes of deuinitee
S. 584 theologicis hypotyposibus
ταῖς θεολογικαῖς ὑποτυπώσειςι

7/12 affermyng deuinitee
S. 584 affirmativae theologiae
τῆς καταφατικῆς θεολογίας

7/28-9 Gadering of Deuine Sentence
S. & Ex. 587 symbolica ... theologia
τῆ συμβολικῆ θεολογία

8/22-3 affirmatyue deuinitee
S. 591 divinas positiones
Ex. 591 positiones
τὰς θείας θέσεις

8/23-4 negatyue deuinitee
S. 591 divinam ablationem
Ex. 591 ablationes
τῆς θείας ἀφαιρέσεως

"Deuinitee" occurs in interpolations in 2/29, 5/4 & 6/32

7/16-17 omits S. 585 quid vult monstrare Spiritus theologia
τί βούλεται δηλοῦν ἡ τοῦ Πνεύματος θεολογία

7/24 in þoo two bookes
S. 586 in theologicis hypotyposibus
Ex. 586 et alia plura ibi tractavimus juxta expressa
Scripturae testimonia
κατὰ τὰς θεολογικὰς ὑποτυπώσεις

Union, Unity

3/11 to be onid with hym
S. 568 ad ejus unitionem
Ex. 568 ad unitionem Dei
πρὸς τὴν ἔνωσιν

5/22-3 he is knittyd vnto hym on þe best maner
S. 578 secundum melius unitus
Ex. See below (5/18-24)
κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον ἐνούμενος

5/26 How we schul be onid to þe cause of al
S. 579 Quomodo oportet (et) uniri, (et hymnos reponere) omnium
causae
Πῶς δεῖ (καὶ) ἐνοῦσθαι, (καὶ ὕμνους ἀνατιθέναι) τῷ πάντων αἰτίῳ

8/21 knittid
S. 591 totus unietur ineffabili
Ex. 591 uniri Verbo ineffabili et aeterno
ὅλος ἐνωθήσεται τῷ ἀφθέγκτῳ

10/6 vnitee
S. & Ex. 599 unitas
ἐνότης

10/15 knittyngly to sey
S. 601 universaliter
Ex. 601 omnino
καθόλου

6/18 "knittyd" and 7/19-20 "onheed of substaunce" are interpolations.

D.H.D. omits the following technical accounts of the nature of mystic union from the Extractio:

Ex. 567 "et desursum superinfluente[m] mentibus superintellectualiter unitis superpulchras claritates".

Ex. 574 (corresponds 4/25)

"et intrant in caliginem, id est, uniuntur incomprehensibilitati divinae".

Ex. 577 (corresponds 5/15-17)

"... Moyses post praedicta separatur ab his qui Dei locum secum viderant et subtrahitur ipsis visis et intrat ad caliginem ignorantiae, id est, unitur incomprehensibilitati divinae quam non penetrat intelligentia".

Ex. 577-8 (corresponds 5/18-24)

"Et per eam omnis unitus Deo (qui est super omnia) constituitur in excellentia quam neque ratio investigat neque intellectus speculatur; et ab omnibus et quasi a se ipso segregatur, et per unionem dilectionis (quae effectiva est verae cognitionis) unitur Deo intellectualiter ignoto, cognitione multo meliori quam sit cognitio intellectualis, et in eo quod intellectualem cognitionem derelinquit super intellectum et mentem Deum cognoscit".

Ex. 582 (corresponds 7/5)

"ut non sub velis creaturarum, sed per unionem ad ipsam, cognoscamus divinam incomprehensibilitatem..."

Unknow

2/18 souereyn-vnknowen

S. 565 superignotum

Ex. 565 superignotus

ὑπεράγνωστον

5/17 (þe derknes of) vnknowyng

S. & Ex. 577 (caliginem) ignorantiae

(τὸν γνόφον) τῆς ἀγνωσίας

5/22 in auoidyng of al knowyng þat is algates vnknowen

S. 578 omnino autem ignoto, vacatione omnis cognitionis

Ex. 578 unitur Deo intellectualiter ignoto

τῷ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγνώστῳ τῆς πάσης γνώσεως ἀνενεργησίᾳ

5/27-28 (bi nouzt seeyng &) vnknowyng

S. 579 (per non-videre et) ignorare

Ex. 579-580 superintellectualiter cognoscere Deum per intellectualis cognitionis remotionem), qui est super omnem visionem et cognitionem δι' ἀβλεψίας καὶ ἀγνωσίας

5/29 in þis same not se & not knowe

S. 580 in ipso non videre et non cognoscere

αὐτὸ τὸ μὴ ἰδεῖν μηδὲ γνῶναι

6/29-30 in a maner þat is vnknowen how unto alle
Interpolation.

7/5 (cleerliche knowe þat) vnknowyng
S. 582 (revelate cognoscamus illam) ignorantiam
Ex. 582 (cognoscamus divinam) incomprehensibilitatem
ἀπερικαλύπτως γινώμεν ἐκείνην τὴν τὴν ἀγνωσίαν

While the volume and diversity of the material considered here necessarily discourage generalized inferences, it is nevertheless immediately apparent that the English text lacks the varied, often technical theological vocabulary of its Latin counterparts. The Deonise Hid Diuinite seems to reproduce Dionysian doctrines in an altogether simpler, more readily accessible form than the previous Latin versions of the text. How far this effect was specifically cultivated by the translator, however, or whether it was involuntarily determined by the limited resources of the English language is less certain and must be accounted for differently according to individual examples.

Symbolic. It is rarely possible to settle the question conclusively on available lexicographical evidence alone. The O.E.D., for example, has no record of the word "symbolic" before the seventeenth century, and its unfamiliarity to the translator may explain his circumlocutions in 7/28-9 and 8/8-9 where the Latin versions include "symbolica" in the title of a non-extant Ps.-Dionysian treatise.⁷⁸ Neither is there any incidence of the word elsewhere in the Cloud Corpus. On the other hand, however, the translator's avoidance of the term in every other context in which it occurs in the Latin versions and, more particularly, his omission of Gallus' extremely precise account of the principles of symbolic theology in chapter III of the Extractio -

In symbolica autem theologia tractavimus transumptiones
vocalorum rerum sensibilium ad designandum anagogice
invisibilia divina (587) -

which corresponds to the brief and less specialized description in the Deonise Hid Diuinite 7/28-30, may indicate some unwillingness on the part of the English writer to dwell on doctrinal technicalities of this kind.

Affirmation and Negation. This does not seem to have been the case in respect of the vocabulary applied to the procedures of affirmative and negative theology. Indeed, the evidence tends to suggest that the vernacular lacked the range of appropriate synonyms which existed in Latin, and the pioneering character of the Deonise Hid Diuinite in the field of vernacular translations of Ps.-Dionysius deprived the English translator of established precedents for the distinctive terminology which had evolved in Greek and Latin in conjunction with Dionysian mystical theology. The translator uses only two root words to express the idea of "affirmative": these are "sette", which usually renders derivatives of Latin "ponere" and also corresponds to most incidences of the cognate noun "positio", and "afferme", which usually translates Latin "affirmare": exceptions to this rule occur in 8/22-3, for example, where "affirmatyue" corresponds to S. "ponentes ... positiones" (Ex. "positiones"), and 7/14, where the translator uses "set" where all his sources have parts of "affirmo". In both these usages the translator places some strain on the resources of English. The O.E.D. does not record "posit" before the seventeenth century, and while "sette" as the precise vernacular equivalent of Latin "ponere" was in common usage in the fourteenth century, the O.E.D. has no examples of it as corresponding to "ponere" with the particular conceptual rather than physical sense of "attribute, affirm"⁷⁹ which the translator requires it to carry here. The English word seems to be loaded with a meaning which it cannot altogether conveniently bear

and which lacks confirmation outside the context in which it occurs. The translator may himself have been aware of the need to reinforce the meaning he gives to "set" in the Deonise Hid Diuinite: in several instances he corroborates the sense of "affirm" by coupling "set" with "affermyngliche" (6/16, 7/25-6, 7/29. cf. also 6/34). His use of "afferme" is much more successful and seems to have found tacit approval in the continued currency of the term while "sette", in the sense of "affirm", remains exclusive to this text. The M.E.D. cites a number of examples of "afferme" from the late fourteenth century, though the earliest reference is to the Wicliffite Bible of 1382. This suggests, therefore, that if the translator of Deonise Hid Diuinite did not himself introduce the term into the language, he was certainly among the first English writers to make significant use of it. Again, however, he intensifies the normal connotations of the word to give it an absolute sense which, though essential in the context of this work, is apparently unparalleled in other documents of the period. Moreover, it is interesting that the translator himself does not employ this specialized vocabulary outside the Deonise Hid Diuinite in his original compositions. "Sette" occurs nowhere in the Cloud Corpus with a comparable meaning, and with the exception of the example of "aferme" in Cloud 125/14, where it has the sense of "confirm" as in the present text 2/8, the only usage which is at all similar is in Discrecioun of Stirings 63/18-19, "I dar not lene to my conseite, affermyng it for fast trewe". Elsewhere, in contexts where he might have been expected to draw on the vocabulary of the Deonise Hid Diuinite, as, for example, in Privy Counselling 143/17-30, where he is considering the names which are applicable to God, he uses the neutral term "sey":

... or what oper soche þing þat þou sey of God: al it is hid & enstorid in þis litil worde is. (P.C. 143/25-6).

A like pattern emerges in respect of the vocabulary which describes the procedure of negation. The two principal means of expression are "deny", which translates every example of "negare", and, most commonly, "do away", which in general corresponds to Latin "ablatio" and "auferre".⁸⁰ "Ablatio" is, however, also rendered by "deniinges" (6/33) and by "negatyue deuinitee" (8/23-4), and conversely, "do away" also translates "removetur" (8/33) and "privationes" (4/9). In a few isolated instances, "remowe", "forsake", "auoidynge" and "put away" serve the same function, and the lengthy interpolation in Chapter II introduces the variant forms of "voide away"(6/8) and "pare away" (6/26).

It seems strange, in view of the linguistic resourcefulness shown in these last examples, that the translator should have opted in the majority of instances for the colourless, even rather cumbersome phrase "do away". He may perhaps have preferred simple accuracy and clarity to stylistic elegance. It is in any case apparent that he adapted basic elements of the established vernacular vocabulary to supply what seems to have been a deficiency in English theological terminology. The M.E.D. cites only one anglicized form of Latin "ablatio", which comes from the late fifteenth century Revelations of St. Bridget, and the earliest reference to "negacioun" in the sense of "a negative assertion" is from c.1425 in the Orcherd of Syon 140/7, "Petir aftir þe trespas of negacioun, or diniynge, þe whiche he did to my sone, he wepte ful bittirly", where the inclusion of "diniynge" as a gloss on "negacioun" may imply that the author considered the term insufficiently familiar to stand without explanation. "Negatif", in the sense

of "a negative statement about ideas or sensory impressions, a negative classification", is first instanced in Walton's Boethius c.1450 (1410): "So he (the soul) devided be a negatyue And afterwardes be affirmatyue", and in related senses and as an adjective or adverb only from the early fifteenth century. Examples of "privation" in English before 1400 seem to have been extremely rare: the O.E.D. cites the mid fourteenth century Pricke of Conscience and, in a different, specifically scientific context, Trevisa's Barth.(1398). If, however, the translator refrained from importing technical Latinate terms which might have obscured the meaning of the text, he does not seem to have hesitated to use a variety of up-to-date words which appear to have become accepted into common usage only in the late fourteenth or even early fifteenth century - words such as "auoidyng",⁸¹ "denie" (first recorded in the Wicliffite Bible of 1384, where it corresponds to Latin "nego"), and "negatiue". There are Wicliffite references to "remowe" from the earlier part of the fourteenth century, and this is in fact the usual expression for the negative process in the Cloud itself (e.g. 47/13, 48/2, 77/8 and 91/11). "Denie" occurs nowhere else in the Corpus.

Intellection. A fourth sphere in which the vernacular seems to have been impoverished by comparison with Latin, not only in terms of exact synonyms but also in respect of a spectrum of vocabulary capable of conveying fine distinctions between different modes of intellectual perception, is that of "vnderstondyng" and "knowyng". The English translation normally has "vnderstonde"⁸² and its derivatives where the Latin versions read "intelligo", "intelligibilis" and even "intellectualis",⁸³ but they also correspond to "mente" (9/11) and "rationalis investigatio" (10/13).⁸⁴ "Knowe" usually renders Latin

"cognoscere" and "cognitio", but it also represents a variety of other terms, including "scire" (3/24) and "comprehensivas".⁸⁵ The translator uses three alternative words in comparable contexts, all of them uncompromisingly vernacular: "woste (neuer)" (3/11) corresponds to the traditional term of negative theology, "ignote" (Gk. ἀγνώστως), as does "(ne) þinkyng" (5/21). "þinkyng" also renders "cogitatio" (5/9), and "kunnyng" (10/6) is used for Latin "scientia".

The available evidence suggests that the translator, unless he was prepared to augment the existing resources of English, had little choice but to employ vernacular terminology here. The M.E.D. records "intellectual" and "intellectualiche" only in Trevisa's translation of Bartholomew during the fourteenth century, and the words do not seem to have become current in English prior to the mid fifteenth century. "Cognicioun" and "cognisaunce" both date from the fifteenth century, as does "cogitacioun", with the exception of one isolated occurrence in the Ancrene Wisse. "Intelligible", however, may conceivably have been known to the translator as an accepted English term, since in addition to Trevisa's Barth., the M.E.D. also lists an example of the word in the Wicliffite Bible of 1382 - a source of many verbal analogies for the Cloud Corpus. Characteristically, however, the translator shows a marked reluctance to compensate for the deficiencies of English in this area by introducing anglicized forms of Latin terminology.⁸⁶

Unknowing. The opposite concept, that of "vnknowyng", is usually expressed by "ignotus" or "ignorantia" in the Latin versions of the De Mystica Theologia which the English translator follows.⁸⁷ The use of "vnknowyng" for both terms in the English text is invariable, though the word "ignoraunce" was undoubtedly familiar to the translator. It

occurs relatively frequently in the Cloud Corpus (eg. Cl. 5/20, 51/5 & 6), where it is often synonymous with the, for this author, more usual term of "vnknowyng" (e.g. Cl. 43/20, 50/8; P.C. 147/28, 159/16; P.P. 52/8; Disc. Sp. 85/17, 88/8). The M.E.D. also provides copious evidence of the currency of the noun "ignoraunce" from the early thirteenth century, and the adjectival form "vnknown", too, was widely used throughout the medieval period. As Professor Hodgson comments in her note to Deonise Hid Diuinite 5/17, the term "vnknowyng" was also in use outside the Cloud Corpus during the fourteenth century; it occurs in Wiclif's works and in the Pricke of Conscience. In these examples, however, it only carries its normal meaning of "ignorance"; it is not recorded with the specialized sense of "ceasing to know" which is often its force in these treatises before Sydney's Arcadia (c.1586).

It seems, therefore, that in this instance the translator adhered closely to native word forms - although he applied them in an altogether original and dynamic sense - and opted to exclude the more obvious and precise equivalent of Latin "ignorantia", "ignoraunce", a word which was already wholly assimilated into the English vocabulary and thus, presumably, readily comprehensible to his prospective audience. He seems, in fact, to have wilfully exploited the construction itself of the word "vnknowe" as the blander term "ignoraunce" could not be exploited, in order to accentuate his contention that if unitive awareness of God could only be achieved through the process of negation, this was paradoxically an active and even, as he stresses in other contexts, a strenuous process. The coinage "vnbe" in Privy Counselling 157/4 is exactly similar in composition and effect.⁸⁸ Further, by insisting, as he does in 5/22 and 7/5, that the "knowyng" of God achieved through loving union with Him is a condition of "vnknowyng"

with respect to the normal human cognitive faculties, he reinforces verbally the paradox which is conveyed by sense alone in the Latin, and emphasizes the essential non-rationality of the mystic state - a point which is formally articulated in Ch. III of the text:

... whan we entren into þe derknes þat is abouen mynde, we schul not onliche fynde þe schortyng of wordes, bot as it were a madnes & a parfite vnresonabiltee of alle þat we seyn. (8/12-15)..

His fondness for this particular verbal paradox is apparent from its recurrence in various forms in Cloud and Privy Counselling:

... to comprehende al him by loue, þe whiche is incomprehensible to alle create knowable mizt. (Cloud 18/18-19);
... & herfore it was þat Seynte Denis seyde: 'þe moste goodly knowyng of God is þat, þe whiche is knowyn bi vnknowyng' (Cloud 125/10-12);
þis is þe cloude of vnknowyng; þis is þat priue loue put in purete of spirit; þis is þe Arke of þe Testament. þis is Denis deuinite, his wisdom & his drewry, his lizty derknes & his vnknowyn kunnynges. (P.C. 154/15-18)

These last two examples are of particular interest in that they illustrate how closely the paradox of "unknown knowledge" was specifically associated in the author's mind with mystical theology as it was defined by Ps.-Dionysius. The second, moreover, which couples this with the related Dionysian paradox of "lizty derknes" (the "souereyn-schinyng derknes" ("supersplendentem ... caliginem") of the prayer which prefaces the text of Deonise Hid Diuinite) and focusses on these as the nucleus of Dionysian mysticism, clearly indicates what it was that, for this author, was of primary importance in the teaching of the De Mystica Theologia, and highlights his acceptance of paradox as being among the most appropriate means of formulating linguistically the Dionysian doctrine of divine transcendence.

It has been noted that although the translator of the Deonise Hid Diuinite modifies the meaning of the word to answer the demands of his text, "vnknowyng" already formed part of the English vocabulary. It is entirely vernacular both in its components and in its construction, which comprises verbal stem qualified by the negating prefix "vn-". In this respect, however, the native habit of word formation precisely coincides with one of the methods characteristic of both Greek and Latin, and the word "vnknowyng" is not only equivalent in meaning to Gk. ἀγνώστος, Latin "ignotus", but it exactly reproduces their composition. The English expression, therefore, can be seen to preserve the verbal model which had developed through Greek and Latin in close association with negative mystical theology so as to become part of its traditional technical vocabulary. The English author's use of the term, in fact, which is at once creative and staunchly traditional, bears out Wolfgang Riehle's observation that English mysticism in general is characterized by a blend of individuality and conservatism. He notes in this connexion that, as in the case of "vnknowyng", many key components of the vocabulary of the English contemplative writers are direct translations from Latin sources:

Überhaupt müssen die neue volkssprachliche Mystik und die eine lange Tradition aufweisende lateinische Mystik in einem engen Verhältnis zueinander gesehen werden. Denn bei ihrem Bemühen um den sprachlichen Ausdruck der mystischen Thematik orientieren sich die volkssprachlichen Texte an den in der lateinischen Mystik gefundenen Ausdrucksformen, und nicht selten ihre mystischen Termini direkte Übertragungen lateinischer Ausdrücke in die Volkssprache.⁸⁹

Negative vocabulary. Many other elements in the diction of the Deonise Hid Diuinite conform to the pattern of stem qualified by a negating prefix, which is at once totally vernacular and wholly in accordance with Greek and Latin negative mystical terminology:⁹⁰

"vngropable" (2/23, 5/19), "vnwise" (3/17 and 27), "vnpassyngliche" (7/21), "vnresonabiltee" (8/14), "vnspekable" (8/21), "vnmiȝtfulnes" (9/17) and "vnlicnes" (9/31). The first syllable in each example corresponds to the Greek negating prefix 'ἀ-' and its various Latin equivalents, and in many cases - those, for instance, of "vngropable", "vnpassyngliche", "vnresonabiltee" and "vnmiȝtfulnes" - the translator seems to have exploited the resources already available to him in the vernacular to create new words on the traditional pattern.⁹¹ In a few cases, (e.g. "inmaterial" (7/18), "inuisible" (2/23, 5/19), and "inordynacioun" (9/16)),⁹² he simply reproduced Latin negative vocabulary in anglicized form without substituting English equivalents for either or both elements of the words as in the above examples. In general, however, he made the Dionysian negative terminology totally his own, to the extent that he incorporated it in expanded or interpolated passages for which there is no precedent in the Latin versions of the text: e.g. "vnbigonne" (2/14, 6/13 and 29) and "vnmaad" (6/13 and 29),⁹³ and as the examples cited here from the Corpus as a whole demonstrate, he employed it confidently though not liberally in works of his own composition.

Where the Latin versions express negative concepts otherwise than by words constructed on this traditional model, however, the English text usually concurs with their practice: e.g. "withouten voice" (8/21), "withoutyn substaunce" (9/4) and "nouȝt seeyng" (5/28). Similarly, in the final sentence of the treatise, where the translator enlarges quite freely on the Extractio version, he combines both methods of expressing negative concepts. In this respect, the English author continues the trend away from the stark uniformity and invariability of Ps.-Dionysius' negative terminology which his Latin

predecessors had already instituted: corresponding to the three examples cited above (8/21, 9/4 and 5/28), for example, the Greek original has ἄφωνος, ἀνούσιος and ἀβλεψίας.

Equally the English translator does not follow Gallus' lead in accentuating the negative bias of the work with frequent interpolations of negative vocabulary.⁹⁴ Nor, in those passages where the principal source of his translation is the Sarracenus text, does he consistently take account of every negative phrase which the Latin version includes,⁹⁵ or reproduce without exception the traditional construction of the original Latin terms.⁹⁶ His softening of the bald catalogue of Dionysian negatives in Sarracenus' version of Ch. IV,⁹⁷ and his emphasis, which echoes Gallus', on their significance for the contemplative way is also striking.⁹⁸ In his translation and his original works alike, the English author is sparing in his application of the technical negative vocabulary of Dionysian mystical theology.

"Super-" vocabulary. The Latin "super-" vocabulary (Gk. ὑπερ -) closely resembles the negative terminology both in composition and in its implication that finite concepts cannot be ascribed to a transcendent God, and it is similarly treated by the English translator. He customarily reproduces the Latin formation of stem qualified by a prefix which defines the sense in which God may be said to possess finite attributes, though on occasions he also substitutes an adjective or verb + adverb construction for the Latin compounds. In either case, he consistently renders Latin "super-" by "souereyn-" or its adverbial form "souereinly", and as with the negative vocabulary, so here he rarely circumvents the "super-" terms where they occur in his sources. Equally, he does not follow the precedent set by Gallus of adding to

the "ὑπερ-" terminology of the original text. One exception to this general rule appears in 4/15-16, where the translator substitutes the significantly different phrase, "in þis he was rauischid to beholde abouen kynde", for the Latin version "illud supernaturaliter intendens"; the possible importance of this variation, which is clearly more than verbal, will be considered below.⁹⁹

The adjective "souerein" is, of course, Latinate and not Teutonic in origin, but it was already in accepted English usage by the second half of the fourteenth century. The O.E.D. has various references to it in the sense of "excelling, supreme, paramount" prior to 1400, including citations from Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale and the Pricke of Conscience. As an adjective qualifying "good" (the equivalent of Latin "summum bonum"), it appears in both Rolle and Wiclif. Walter Hilton includes "souereyn soþfastnes, souereyn goodnes..." in his account of appropriate descriptions of God in Ch. 32 of Scale, Book II. The Cloud author himself uses the term in this sense relatively frequently in his original works: e.g. Cloud 2/3, 74/13; P.C. 169/19; P.P. 51/20; Disc.St. 75/19; Disc.Sp. 88/7; Ben.Min. 31/10. In Deonise Hid Diuinite, however, the term seems to be invested with a peculiar, exclusive meaning which is barely paralleled in the other texts in the group. The nearest equivalent is in Cloud 18/11-12, where the author refers to the "souerein desirable ... þe whiche is God", and the allusion to "þe souereynest wisdom of his Godhead" (47/11-12) is perhaps also comparable.¹⁰⁰ The prefix 'souereyn-', however, does not properly possess the negative connotations of the Dionysian terminology: the "souereyn-" vocabulary denotes only the superlative degree to which God possesses finite attributes, whereas the ὑπερ- ("super-") vocabulary suggests that God possesses such

attributes to excess, and therefore, in a real sense, does not possess them in any way which it is within man's power to comprehend. The nearer vernacular equivalent for Latin "super-", in this respect, would be the prefix "ouer-". It is interesting, indeed, that where the English author employs the idea in his original compositions, he substitutes the native form "ouer-" for the latinate "souereyn-" when he refers to "þe oueraboundaunt loue ... of God in himself" in Cloud 40/15.

However, while the author treats the "super-" terminology linguistically in the same way as its negative counterpart - namely, by adapting the resources available to him in contemporary English to produce a compound which is at once strikingly individual and yet, in terms of its construction, in total accord with the traditions of Dionysian mystical language - he nevertheless seems to discriminate between them in his relative willingness to apply them outside the context from which they originate. It may be that this is simply a just reflection of the dominant themes of the Cloud Corpus, since negative language is more apt to describe the conditions under which a soul might achieve unitive knowledge of the transcendent God - a subject which consistently preoccupies the author of these texts - than the more abstract and speculative "super-" terminology. It is also conceivable, however, that the English author, ruled as in all things by his concern to convey his teaching in an accessible and readily assimilable fashion, regarded the "super-" vocabulary as esoteric and technical to a degree which curtailed its usefulness outside the context which occasioned it. Perhaps, too, he found the rather cerebral and high-sounding prose which the proliferation of such epithets tends to foster a potential obstacle to the clear

spiritual understanding of his readership.

Darkness. The conscious preservation of the traditional characteristics of Dionysian mystical vocabulary in these two instances makes it accordingly less easy to account for the translator's lack of precision in rendering the concepts of "cloud" and "darkness" as they occur in the De Mystica Theologia. Both Latin sources of the Deonise Hid Diuinite consistently differentiate Gk. γνόφος from σκότος, translating the former by "caligo" and the latter by "tenebrae",¹⁰¹ thus insisting on the distinction between "cloud" and "darkness" which goes back to the Moses narrative in Exodus, though, it has been argued in Ch. II of this thesis, Ps.-Dionysius himself does not seem to have acknowledged the distinction; he rather interprets the biblical darkness as representing the state wherein finite concepts and modes of knowledge are finally negated which is the term of the process of aphairesis.¹⁰² Interestingly, the English author's version seems to embody the sense of the Greek text more precisely, in that "derknes" or the adjective "derk" render both the terms which occur in the Latin sources. As in the original text of Ps.-Dionysius, the biblical allusion is effectively submerged - though, as the translator almost certainly did not draw on a Greek text, it is difficult to account for his practice satisfactorily. He may have been concerned to preserve the clarity and simplicity of his translation, since the evidence of the M.E.D. certainly tends to suggest that he would neither have been ignorant of the distinction nor lacking in the verbal resources to reproduce it in his English version of the text. The entry for "mist" seems to indicate that it was the received equivalent of Lat. "caligo" (or "nubilium") by the second half of the fourteenth century. The Wicliffite Bible of 1384, for example, translates Acts 13.11 as "Anoon a myst (Lat. Caligo) fel

down on hym and derknesse (Lat. tenebrae)". Similarly, under "misti" (adj.1), the M.E.D. has further examples from the same source in which the word corresponds to derivatives of "caligo" and "nubilium". In the second sense of "misti" listed by the M.E.D., "open to symbolical or spiritual interpretation; figurative", the English word seems to represent Lat. "mysticus" (e.g. (1440) Promptorium Parvulorum 340: "Mysty, or prevey to mannys wytte: Misticus"), which is also rendered by the English translator as "derke" in 2/19.¹⁰³ The entry for "derk", however, confirms the meaning which it supports in the Deonise Hid Diuinite from other sources: e.g. (a1398) Trev. Barth. 11b/a: "Alle bodilich þinges þat bep I seid of god haueþ figuratif mistik and derk menyng"; Ibid. 14b/b: "þese wordes bep ful trewe, and passiþ alle men touchinge þe durk & mistik menyng þerof". But as the example from Acts 13.11 quoted above suggests, in its principal non-metaphorical sense the English term "derknes" seems to have been the received equivalent of Latin "tenebrae" - an inference which is corroborated by the definition which the M.E.D. cites from Promptorium Parvulorum 119: "Derke or merke: Tenebrosus, obscurus."¹⁰⁴

While the Deonise Hid Diuinite translates both "caligo" and "tenebrae" as "derknes", however, and omits any reference to "cloud", its author uses both terms apparently synonymously in his major treatise, the Cloud of Unknowing. Indeed, as the title of this work suggests, he even shows some preference for "cloud" as a metaphor for the divine transcendence. He couples both metaphors without comment on many occasions, as, for example, in 28/18-19, where he alludes to "þis cloude & þis derknes abouen þee", but the most revealing passage in this connexion is the attempted explanation of his figurative language which occurs in Ch. IV, 23/20-24:

For when I sey derknes, I mene a lackyng of knowyng; as alle þat þing þat þou knowest not, or elles þat þou hast forȝetyn, it is derk to þee, for þou seest it not wiþ þi goostly ize. & for þis skile it is not clepid a cloude of þe eire, bot a cloude of vnknowyng, þat is bitwix þee & þi God.

The ethos of the passage is entirely Dionysian, but comparison with the author's indiscriminate rendering of "caligo" and "tenebrae" in the Deonise Hid Diuinite may indicate that he drew on secondary sources of Dionysian theology in addition to the De Mystica Theologia itself.¹⁰⁵

Mystical. It has been noted that in 2/19, the adjective "derke" corresponds to Lat. "mysticus" in the phrase "derke inspirid spekynges" which renders the "mysticorum eloquiorum" of the original text. The currency of the English epithet in this sense has already been indicated, yet it might be remarked that if lexicographical evidence suggests that the English translator was not eccentric in his choice of vocabulary, he clearly handles the phrase as a whole in a peculiar, rather oblique fashion. It seems, in fact, designed to periphrase or circumvent the word "mystical", which is the obvious translation for the text of the original. In this respect, his treatment of the phrase is not without parallel. "Mysticus" is translated by the vernacular term "hid" in the title and in 5/18,¹⁰⁶ and where the word occurs in an explanatory interpolation in Gallus' Extractio which corresponds to Deonise Hid Diuinite 7/5-6, the English translator abides by the version of Sarracenus which does not contain the term. Perhaps the most interesting instance of apparent evasion of the word, however, is in 2/32, where the translator substitutes the paradoxical phrase "blynde beholdynges" for Sarracenus "mysticas visiones". The English phrase is clearly constructed on the paradoxical model traditionally associated with Dionysian mysticism, and is the counterpart in both form

and meaning of the concept of unknown knowledge. The translator thus replaces one technical expression of Dionysian theology with another equally technical, and it is perhaps surprising that he seems to favour the more esoteric phrase which evokes metaphorically what the Latin source states without ambiguity.¹⁰⁷

The reasons for this procedure on the part of the translator are difficult to determine. Like "derke", the adjective "hid" is Teutonic in origin and readily comprehensible. It occurs relatively frequently in the Deonise Hid Diuinite - once in a passage interpolated by the translator (2/29), and elsewhere it is used interchangeably with "priue", the two words corresponding indiscriminately to a variety of Latin terms of equivalent meaning (2/20, 6/23, 6/27, 7/7-8). "Priue" itself, though Latinate rather than Teutonic in its derivation, was wholly assimilated into the vernacular by the thirteenth century and shares with "derke" and "hid" the merit of simplicity and immediate intelligibility.¹⁰⁸ It may be, however, that the translator - again seemingly unwilling to import Latin terms gratuitously where English could furnish an adequate alternative - was bound by the poverty of the English vocabulary in this area as much as by his desire to produce an unambiguous text. The derivatives of two of the Latin words which carry the sense "hidden" in this text, "occult" and "abscond", only became absorbed into the English language in the post-medieval era. "Closen" is listed in the M.E.D. (paragraphs 11a and b cover the meaning of "hide, conceal, keep secret"), but with the exception of one isolated reference to the early fourteenth century Shoreham Poems, the only citations are from the very late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.¹⁰⁹

The word "mistely", however, occurs twice elsewhere in the Cloud Corpus: in Privy Counselling 144/25 and Discrecioun of Stirings 75/18, and although these particular incidences are not recorded in the M.E.D., the examples of the word (in the sense of "figuratively, symbolically, allegorically, mystically") which the dictionary does incorporate indicate the currency of the word, in theological texts at least, from the late fourteenth century. The entry includes two citations from both the first Wicliffite Bible and from works attributed to Walter Hilton, the Scale of Perfection and the Qui Habitat. In its adjectival form, "mystical" is not instanced before 1500, but there are several examples of "mystik", drawn mainly from the Wicliffite Bibles and Trevisa's translation of Bartholomew. The examples from the Wicliffite Bibles show "mystik" as rendering Latin "mysticas", and the citations from Trevisa show the adjective in accepted usage alongside the various synonyms for it which occur in the Deonise Hid Diuinite: "mystik & dirk vndirstondinge" (8a/b); "figuratif, mistik & dym & derke tokenynges" (78b/a); "mystyk and priue þinges" (157a/b). It seems, therefore, that in this last instance at least, the translator systematically substituted familiar and unequivocal vernacular terms for a Latinate word which would have preserved the text of the original more closely and seems to have been accepted if not widely used in late fourteenth century English - a word, indeed, which he himself was occasionally willing to employ in his own original compositions. It may be that he was wary of the term, perhaps considering it insufficiently current or free from ambiguity to be used in the context of a translation whose principal object was intelligibility, or perhaps he thought it dangerously esoteric and open to misconstruction. Either of these reasons may likewise go some way to explaining his comparable treatment of the Latin term "mysteria", which he also

translates by "pryue þinges" and "priuetees" in 2/19 and 3/26, although in this case there is some evidence to suggest that there may have been some uncertainty as to its precise meaning in the fourteenth century. Various references from the Wicliffite Bible, for example, where "misteri" is the unvarying equivalent of Latin "mysterium", guardedly incorporate "priuyte" as an explanatory gloss on the Latinate term: e.g. W. Bible(1) Mat. 13.11 "For to 3ou it is 3ouen for to knowe the mysterie, or priuyte (L. mysteria) of the kyngdam of heuenes"; *ibid.* 2 Thes. 2.7; also Trevisa Barth. 325b/a "... misterie and priuete..." (L. mysterium). It may have been to avoid possible misunderstanding that the English text resorts to simpler vernacular alternatives, though clearly something of the richness and precision of the Latin vocabulary is sacrificed in the English version.

Theology. Similar inferences may perhaps be drawn from the English author's use of the term "deuinytee". It occurs in the translation with three distinct senses:

1. "theology" (e.g. in the title of the text, 2/19, 7/10 etc). This is its principal meaning, in which it corresponds to Latin "theologia". It also has this sense in other texts of the Cloud group, though incidences of the word are comparatively rare: e.g. Cloud 30/14; Pistle of Preier 55/20-21; in Privy Counselling 154/17, where it is used in connexion with this particular treatise, it has the specialized sense often implicit here of "mystical theology"
2. "Godhead" (e.g. 4/13)
3. In 8/22-3 and 8/23-4, it is qualified by "affirmatyue" and "negatyue", and is glossed by Prof. Hodgson as "positive-" and "negative statements made about God".

The M.E.D. confirms the currency of the term "deuinytee" with the meaning it most commonly supports in this text ("theology; knowledge or learning in divine matters or in Scripture") from the early fourteenth century, and the references include a passage from

Scale Bk. I, ch. 24, which is a near contemporary of the Cloud Corpus. What is perhaps surprising, however, in view of the translator's avoidance of the word "theology" (the anglicized form of the "theologia" of his Latin sources) is the evidence of the O.E.D., which seems to indicate that the word was in accepted English usage by the latter part of the fourteenth century. Piers Plowman A. XI 136 and Chaucer's Parson's Tale 969 are cited as examples. The reasons for the apparent avoidance of the term by the English author are difficult to ascertain. He may perhaps have appreciated the flexibility of the term "deuinytee", which combines the senses of Godhead and the study of religious science: the ambiguity of the title of the text is particularly suggestive. In effect, however, his rather conservative preference for the term "deuinytee" which, though Latinate in origin, had been longer and more thoroughly absorbed into the vernacular, undoubtedly tends to simplify and clarify the English text, and incidentally serves to minimise the technical aspect of the Dionysian vocabulary. Indeed, it often seems the case that the English translator shuns terms whose very status in the received technical vocabulary of theology preempts individual usage and dulls the challenge which individual incidences present to the reader's understanding, and here, perhaps, he is similarly concerned to avoid a word too redolent of the schools in order to forestall its tendency to evoke scholastic principles and habits of thought. These factors may indeed have had some force in determining the translator's choice of vocabulary, since the various instances in which the English version significantly modifies the text of the original (notably, "bookes of deuinitee" (7/11) which renders Sarracenus "theologicis hypotyposibus", and the even looser translation of the same phrase by "poo two bookes" in 7/24;¹¹⁰ and secondly, the substitution of the title "Gadering of Deuine Sentence" (7/28-9)

or its variant form "Gaderid Book of Deuine Sentence" (8/8-9) for the non-extant treatise by Ps.-Dionysius referred to in all the Latin versions of the text as the Symbolica Theologia¹¹¹). are clearly calculated to expound as well as translate the terms of the original Latin text, and even go some way to elucidate the points of doctrine which they express.

Union, Unity. The terminology which pertains to the unitive experience itself is undoubtedly the most specialized and sensitive in the language of the De Mystica Theologia. In the Latin sources, the allied concepts of "union" and "unity" are rendered by "unire", "unitio" and "unitas". The related anglicized form, "vnitee", however, occurs only once in the English text (10/6), where it corresponds to Lat. "unitas" and denotes a possible attribute of God, "unity". Elsewhere, and in his independent additions to the text, the translator opts for the simple vernacular terms "onid" and "knyttyd" to express the idea of union in both its technical mystical and more generalized senses. Thus, the bond between soul and body is described by the term "knittyd" in 6/18, and even the notion of unity is expressed as "onheed" in its only other occurrence in the text, where the translator incorporates the phrase "onheed of substaunce" in his expanded account of the mystery of the Trinity in 7/19-20. The translator's preference for vernacular vocabulary here seems to be equally marked in the Cloud corpus as a whole: e.g. Cloud 107/3, 108/20-21; P.C. 136/24. In P.C. 139/13-14, the two terms favoured in the Deonise Hid Diuinite are again associated in the description of the unitive condition of the soul, "knittid & onid in grace & in spirit to be precious beyng of God in himself only as he is". The words are similarly linked and connected with the highest contemplative state in Cloud 32/15-16, where mystic union

is defined as being "... knit to God in spirite, & in oneheed of loue".¹¹²

That the use of vernacular vocabulary here is a matter of preference rather than necessity seems implied by the single incidence of "vnitee" and confirmed by the evidence of the O.E.D., which records the word from the early fourteenth century. Two of the first examples, presumably antedating the Deonise Hid Diuinite by some half a century (Cursor Mundi 6342, "þis wandes takens persons thre, And an-fald Godd in vnite"; Spec. Gy. Warw. 492, "Wid þe fader, and wid þe sone, And wid þe holi gost in vnite") include the word "vnite" in a context identical to that in which the later text has the vernacular compound "onheed" (7/19-20). As Riehle notes, however, by far the most common equivalents for parts of "unire" in the vernacular religious literature of the period derive from "on", and the author of the Cloud Corpus seems to have valued the immediacy and easy intelligibility of the germanic vocabulary.¹¹³ Where he includes "vnitee" - Extractio "neque unum, neque unitas", D.H.D.10/ 6 "ne on, ne vnitee" - it is perhaps because in this context to have used the vernacular compound "onheed", which corresponds precisely to the Latin form "unitas", contiguous to "on", might not have made the distinct claims which the Latin text proposes here concerning the nature of the Godhead sufficiently clear to an audience less well versed in the technicalities of theological language than the translator himself. The English author is consistently careful to avoid fettering his text with excessive technicalities of either terminology or doctrine, and it is noteworthy in relation to his treatment of the vocabulary pertaining to mystic union that he also excludes from his translation the more specialized theoretical accounts of its nature which are incorporated in the

Extractio.¹¹⁴ The inclusion of the term "vnitee", however, which the examples cited from the O.E.D. show to have been in accepted usage to denote the oneness of the three persons of the Trinity, demonstrates the concern of the translator to preserve the technical accuracy of his text whilst adapting his vocabulary to the comprehension of his disciple - an end, in this case, best served by the retention of the latinate form. In other instances, however, and particularly where the translator is concerned with the experience of contemplative union rather than the ontological concept of unity, the germanic terms fulfil the same function. In 3/11, for example, the phrase "to be onid with hym" exactly reproduces the sense of Lat. "unitio", which occurs in the texts of both Sarracenus and Gallus. This example is, in fact, particularly interesting, since his Latin sources significantly modify the text of the original and the early translation by Erigena at this point. The reading of the Greek, πρὸς τὴν ἕνωσιν, is more accurately rendered by Erigena's term "unitas".¹¹⁵ The alteration to "unitio" by the later translators is representative of their systematic attempts to bring Dionysian theology unquestionably into line with orthodox Christian doctrine on the sense in which the soul may be said to achieve union with God. By his choice of terminology, therefore, the English translator - unconsciously, perhaps, but nonetheless effectively - confirms the later interpretation and continues the trend which made the text of Ps.-Dionysius at once more accessible to the Western Church and more consistent with its dogma.

Excess, Above mind. The vocabulary which defines the nature of the unitive experience itself and the conditions in which it obtains was listed above under two headings, "excess" and "abouen mynde" (pp. 155 and 158-9), though the terms are closely interconnected and,

except for a preliminary account of their relations to the Latin sources, cannot be adequately discussed in isolation from one another.

The English text does not reproduce the Latin term "excessus", but substitutes synonymous phrases of vernacular origin where the word occurs in its sources. In 3/13 and 10/21-2, the translator introduces the compound "ouerpassyng", and the verb "excedere" is represented either by "be abouen" (3/26, 4/9) or the variant "pass abouen" (4/21, 5/7).¹¹⁶ The M.E.D., however, provides evidence of the currency of the anglicized form of the Latin noun in theological texts from the late fourteenth century. The earliest recorded occurrences of the word in the relevant sense of "rapture, ecstasy etc." are from the Wicliffite Bible of 1382, Ps. 30.1: "The salm of Daid for the ecces of mynd"; *ibid.* 30.23: "I forsothe seide in exces of my mynde (L. excessu mentis mea), I am cast aferr fro the face of thin ezen"; and from the Wicliffite Bible of 1384, Deeds 11.5: "I sy3 in excess of my soule a visioun". The references also include one from Privy Counselling, where the English author himself incorporates the word in a recollection of Richard of St. Victor's Benjamin Minor: "By þe whiche Beniamyn ben vnderstonden alle þoo þat in excesse of loue ben rauschid abouen mynde, þe prophete seing þus: Ibi Beniamyn adolescentulus in mentis excessu. þat is to sey: 'þer is Beniamyn, a 3ong childe, in excesse of mynde'." (P.C. 150/19-23). Here, as in the example quoted from the earlier Wicliffite Bible, the English phrase "excesse of mynde" corresponds to Latin "excessu mentis", and it is supplemented by the expanded explanatory version, "rauschid abouen mynde", which, the text affirms, obtains "in excesse of loue".¹¹⁷ This second form of the phrase is nearly echoed in Deonise Hid Diuinite 4/15-16, where the Apostle Bartholomew is said

to have been "...rauischid to beholde abouen kynde."¹¹⁸ Indeed, the Middle English translation is particularly interesting at this point, since it modifies the phraseology though not the sense of the text of Sarracenus ("illud supernaturaliter intendens"), substituting vocabulary which was already current in English religious literature and which this author himself associated specifically with the traditional Dionysian theory of mystical union. The term "rauischid" is, in fact, his most common epithet for the soul's sudden accession to the state of ecstasy in the Cloud Corpus as a whole, and it is often directly linked with the biblical types of the contemplative, Moses and Benjamin. Translating the same text from Ps. 68.27 in the Stodye of Wysdome 46/10-14, for example, he reiterates "rauesching" where his most natural choice would have been "excesse":

... þe tyme þat þi mynde be rauischid abouen itself ... in þe beholding of God & godly þinges. So þat it be fulfillid in þee þat is wretyn in þe psalme: 'Ibi Beniamyn adol(es)centulus in mentis excessu'. þat is: 'þere is Beniamyn, þe zonge childe, in rauesching of mynde'.¹¹⁹

It occurs again in a similar context earlier in the same treatise, 45/6-9:

For whi in what tyme þat a soule is rauischid abouen hymself by habundaunce of desires & a greet multytude of loue, so þat it is enflawmyd with þe lizt of þe Godheed, sekirly þan dyȝep al mans reson....,

in Cloud 47/18-19:

... so hiȝe rauischid in contemplacion & loue of þe Godheed....,

and in the descriptive title of Cloud ch. 71(12/4-5),

þat som may not come to fele þe perfeccion of þis werk bot in tyme of rauesching, & som mowe haue it when þei wil, in

þe comoun state of mans soule.

Comparable examples may also be cited from the Pistle of Preier 53/19-20 and 58/24-59/1, and its precise significance is defined in the body of Cloud ch. 71, where the author explains his distinctions between the different orders of contemplative experience:

For som þer ben þat wipoutyn moche & longe goostly exercise mowe not com þerto: & 3it it schal be bot ful seeldom, & in special callyng of oure Lorde, þat þei schul fele þe perfeccion of þis werk: þe whiche callyng is clepid rauishing. (Cloud 126/7-10)¹²⁰

In all these instances, emphasis is on the essentially non-rational character of the unitive experience - the mind and soul are momentarily rapt "abouen" themselves, the Cloud author repeatedly insists. His terminology here recalls the various equivalents for Lat. "excedere" and "excessus" in the Deonise Hid Diuinite ("be abouen", "passen abouen", "ouerpassyng" etc.). The phrase "abouen mynde" itself occurs relatively frequently in the English translation and in only two cases (5/24 and 8/13), it should be noted, is it an exact rendering of "super mentem" in the Latin sources. In four other examples (2/25, 2/25-6, 4/3, 6/28) it is an interpolation, and in the remaining two instances (3/16-17 and, in slightly variant form, 5/10-11) it represents an important departure from the Latin original. Where both the Extractio and Sarracenus have "sursumageris", the corresponding passage in the English text reads "þou schalt be drawen up abouen mynde in affeccioun" (3/16-17): the qualifying phrase "in affeccioun" possibly takes up a hint from Gallus' Gloss, which here stresses the primacy of love in the contemplative ascent, but "abouen mynde" is apparently a gratuitous interpolation on the part of the translator.¹²¹ Similarly, with the expression "and setteþ hym abouen þe natureel teermes of hymself"(5/10-11),

the translator shows some license in his treatment of his sources, in order, it seems, to accentuate his own individual interpretation of the Dionysian theory of unitive knowledge: the Latin source at this point has, "... monstratur intelligibilibus summitatibus sanctissimorum locorum ejus superveniens".

The frequency and consistency with which the translator applies the phrase "abouen mynde" in the Deonise Hid Diuinite suggests, therefore, that it had for him a technical sense descriptive of the character of mystic union,¹²² and this seems to be substantiated by his accounts of the experience in other works of the Corpus where he had none of the obligations of a translator to inhibit him. In ch. 8 of the Cloud, for example, he specifies the location of the unitive experience:

Bot in þe hizer partie of contemplatiue liif, a man is abouen himself & vnder his God. Abouen himself he is, for whi he purposeþ him to wyne þeder bi grace, wheþer he may not come bi kynde; þat is to sey, to be knit to God in spirite, & in oneheed of loue & acordaunce of wille. (Cloud 32/12-16)

Later, in chs. 62-7, which have as their immediate source Richard of St. Victor's Benjamin Minor but derive ultimately from the De Trinitate of St. Augustine, the author includes a detailed analysis of the faculties of the soul which serves as a gloss on this assertion. He recognizes five spiritual faculties which are divided into two categories: mind, reason and will are labelled principal faculties, and imagination and sensuality comprise the secondary category. Of the foremost of these, mind, he says,

Mynde is soche a miȝt in itself, þat properly to speke & in maner it worcheþ not itself. Bot reson & wille, þei ben two worching miȝtes, & so is ymaginacion & sensualite also. & alle þees foure miȝtes & þeire werkes mynde conteneþ & comprehendþ in itself. & on non oþer wise it is seide þat mynde worcheþ, bot ȝif soche a comprehencion be a werke. (Cloud 115/9-14)

The concept of mind, therefore, is held to encompass all natural human faculties of perception and intellection. Thus, in insisting that the unitive experience takes place "abouen mynde", the English author dissociates the contemplative act from the normal processes of cognition. The contemplative is properly "abouen himself" for the duration of his mystical experience. More precisely, in the Cloud author's terminology, the contemplative transcends all finite modes of knowledge and enters into the "first..." or "souereyn poynte of þe spirite" where he apprehends God in an ecstasy of love. He describes this condition in Privy Counselling 169/19 as a "goostly onyng to his loue in þe souereyn poynte of þi spirite".¹²³

III. Apex mentis: the background to the Cloud author's unitive theology.

Here, however, it is necessary to diverge from the predominantly linguistic approach to the Deonise Hid Diuinite which has so far been adopted to examine the ideological relationship of the text to its Latin sources. Clearly where the translator deviates from his sources in order to emphasize that the unitive experience takes place "abouen mynd", his motivation must be theological rather than linguistic. The precise background to this aspect of the English translation may, therefore, best be determined by ascertaining the debt of its author's theory of mystical knowledge, as it is defined here and in the Corpus as a whole, not only to the immediate textual sources of the Deonise Hid Diuinite, but perhaps also to other works in the Dionysian mystical tradition.

The use of the phrase "þe souereyn poynte of þe spirite" is, in fact, itself evidence that the Cloud author was aware of the theological controversy concerning the spiritual faculty whereby the soul might

achieve contemplative union, which persisted throughout the thirteenth century, and that although he did not actively enter into the debate, his views on the question were firmly decided. The English expression corresponds to the Latin phrase "apex mentis" (Gk. τὸ ἀνώτατον μέρος) - one of the terms designating the mystical faculty which became prominent in the vocabulary of the medieval schools. Its history is traced by Prof. Dr. Endre von Ivanka in his article "Apex Mentis. Wanderung und Wandlung eines stoischen Terminismus".¹²⁴ The term originated in Stoic philosophy, where it denoted the single faculty of the soul from which all others were held to derive. It was principally through Origen, in whose works elements of Stoicism merge and interact with the different traditions of Christian and Platonist ideology, that the concept became absorbed into the mainstream of Christian thought. His impact on Gregory of Nyssa's negative mystical theology was decisive in this respect, since it seems to have been through Gregory's mediating influence that the Stoic notion was assimilated by Ps.-Dionysius and so far developed by him as to form the basis of a contemplative theory which alienated mystical apprehension of God from the sphere of the senses and intellect.

The tradition of mystical theology which Ps.-Dionysius fostered on this premise was thus, von Ivanka insists, distinct in origin from that which had its roots in Platonist philosophy. This parallel tradition was grounded in the assumption that the soul and the One were intrinsically alike in kind. Not admitting the radical disjunction between human nature and the Divine posited by the Dionysian school, Platonism therefore conceived of the ascent to contemplative awareness as one continuous process demanding successive purifications of the intellect until the soul regained its pristine condition and thereby

its inherent capacity to apprehend the One. Eternal vision of the One was hence an extension of earthly vision, differing from it in degree but not in essence. In its development through Plotinus and St. Augustine, the Platonist position inevitably underwent considerable modification - most importantly through the recognition of love as a mode of knowledge and of divine grace as a necessary precondition for unitive comprehension. Continuity and the efficacy of the purified intellect, however, remained characteristic principles of the Augustinian concept of the contemplative way.

It would, of course, be misleading to suggest that these two traditions of mystical theology were generated and developed in entire isolation one from the other. While they occupied different ground in respect of their teaching on the mystical faculty, many of their sources were held in common, and some reciprocal influence was, moreover, wholly predictable at the hands of medieval religious writers for whom both formed part of the authoritative heritage of contemplative theology. In particular, the Stoic theory of apex mentis and its related terminology were, from the thirteenth century, recurrently associated with the Augustinian notion of ratio superior, which derives principally from Plotinus and finds no echo in the Dionysian Corpus. The point is convincingly urged by Robert W. Mulligan, S.J., in his article "Ratio Superior and Ratio Inferior: the Historical Background".¹²⁵ The key text for St. Augustine's account of the faculties of the soul is the De Trinitate, Book XII. Here Augustine divides mind into two parts, the higher and the lower; of these, the lower is capable of attaining only to scientia, discursive knowledge, while the higher is gifted with the potential to achieve sapientia, the wisdom of contemplation.¹²⁶ The distinction between the two orders

of knowledge is summarized by Mulligan:

Sapientia is the virtue proper to the upper part - the part which is itself an image of God and whose primary function is the contemplation of the divine reasons. 'Quantumcumque se extendent in id quod aeternum est', St. Augustine states, 'tanto magis inde formatur ad imaginem Dei...' (XII, 7: P.L. 42, 1004). There is no possibility whatsoever of the lower part of the reason ever acquiring sapientia, for wisdom excludes the type of sense knowledge with which the lower part is related.¹²⁷

It is interesting, however, as Mulligan goes on to suggest, that St. Augustine may himself have been influenced by the Stoic concept of ἡγεμονικόν, since in Book XII, 8, he too refers to the faculty of the soul able to achieve contemplative union as "principale mentis humanae" (P.L. 42, 1044).¹²⁸

In spite of these interchanges, the broad distinctions between the contemplative theory of the Stoic and Platonist schools nevertheless remained clearly discernible in the mystical literature of the medieval period. The Platonist tradition as it was developed by St. Augustine found its natural successors among the Victorines, and was principally consolidated and classified by Richard of St. Victor in his enormously influential works of mystical theology, the Benjamin Minor, Benjamin Major and De IV Gradibus Violentate Caritatis. Richard consistently emphasizes the continuity of the contemplative ascent, and although he affirms the transcendence of reason as a precondition for the attainment of union, his concept of the unitive experience itself is not anoetic, but involves the operation of the intelligentia. The Victorine position is discussed in some detail in the first appendix to this chapter, since it has a bearing on the Cloud of Unknowing in two important respects: in the first instance, the process of interaction between the two principal traditions of mystical theology which has

already been outlined is very much at work in this text, where elements of the Augustinian and Victorine theories concerning the faculties of the soul are integrated with what, it is hoped to demonstrate, is an essentially Dionysian concept of the nature of unitive knowledge.

Secondly, the prolific work on the Dionysian Corpus by the Victorine abbot Thomas Gallus, which contributed so largely to the development of medieval contemplative theory in general and was particularly influential on both the text of the Deonise Hid Diuinite and the Cloud author's wider interpretation of Dionysian mystical theology, was written against a background of Augustinian principles which Gallus inherited from his Victorine masters, Hugh and Richard.

Thomas Gallus: the development of the theory of synderesis.

A full estimate of Gallus' contemplative theology is given in Walsh's doctoral thesis, 'Sapientia Christianorum'. The Doctrine of Thomas Gallus, Abbot of Vercelli on Contemplation, and only its major precepts can be summarized here.

Gallus' writings are characteristically Victorine in respect of their preoccupation with classifying the contemplative ascent and close psychological analysis of the soul at the different stages of its progress to union. His categories, however, are based on the Dionysian theory of the celestial hierarchy. The most detailed exposition of the hierarchic principle occurs in an extract from the non-extant Commentary on Isaias which is preserved in Ch. X of the Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy.¹²⁹ The nine orders of angels are here divided into three groups, which are associated with the three domains or mansions of the hierarchy of the mind. Differentiating the three categories, Gallus writes,

Primus autem modus precipue consistit in pulcro et claro, et hiis delectatur et naturaliter inquesitivus et veritatis; secundus in dulci et suavi, et facit desiderativum bonitatis. Primus dicitur intellectus, secundus affectus. Uterque in prima mansione oritur, in secunda proficit, in tertia perficitur. Uterque in prima videtur sola naturalia et naturaliter operari, licet illuminante gratia adiuvetur; in secunda co-operari gratie illuminati et adiuvanti; in tertia, illuminari et portari a pura gratia.¹³⁰

The three mansions are respectively the domains of nature, nature assisted by grace, and grace alone. In the two preliminary stages of the contemplative ascent, the mind is occupied with objects within the scope of the natural human cognitive faculties and both its intellectual and affective powers (impelled, as Gallus consistently reaffirms, by the will ("liberum arbitrium")) are engaged. The third and highest mansion, where only grace is operative, is the province of synderesis. Walsh conveniently summarizes its divisions:

	<u>1ST HIERARCHY</u>	<u>THIRD MANSION</u>
'Sola gratia: quibus elevatur mens supra se: et omnes scripturas supergressa, unitur Deo in sapientia'.	SERAPHIM ('Unitio')	The perfection of union in the <u>apex affectus - scintilla synderesis</u> .
	CHERUBIM ('Revelatio')	The perfection of intellectual knowledge by infused <u>illum- ination</u> . Consummation of the <u>apex intellectus attracti</u> .
	THRONES ('Susceptio')	The reception of infused graces and the divine attraction of the intellect and affection. ¹³¹

This third mansion is, moreover, identified with the Augustinian concept of ratio superior - the spiritual faculty which is capable of attaining mystic union:

Tertia et summa mansio pro tabulato habet superiorem vim anime, id est synderesim sive superioris partis vires ...¹³²

Gallus' theory of unitive knowledge is thus born out of the interaction of the Augustinian and Dionysian traditions of mystical theology. He inherits principally from Hugh and Richard the pre-occupation with the relative functions of the intellectual and affective faculties of cognition in the ascent to contemplation. Like them, Gallus affirms the ultimate primacy of love:

Sed iterum indubitanter arbitramur affectum inestimabiliter profundius et sublimius a Domino in ipsum Deum trahi quam intellectum, quia, viz., plus diligunt quam 'investigare' vel intelligere sufficient. 133

Equally, his emphasis on the centrality of Christ is characteristically Victorine: Christ is identified as the sum of the Dionysian hierarchies, and this introduces a strong element of devotion to all levels of the contemplative ascent.¹³⁴ It is the outpouring of divine love issuing in the Incarnation which, for Gallus, determines that the proper response of the contemplative should be one of reciprocal ecstatic love. This, too, is the basis for his constant association of the De Mystica Theologia with the Canticle of Canticles: the theory of contemplation which the Dionysian text propounds is, he insists, complemented by the practical account of love in action which the Canticle embodies.

He owes, however, to Dionysian mystical tradition the tendency to divorce the faculty of unitive awareness from all preceding modes of knowledge. During the preliminary stages of the contemplative ascent the intellectual and loving powers are held to function simultaneously. Gallus insists that both are in real terms faculties of cognition, and distinguishes them by analogy with the senses: the intellectual power, like the senses of sight and hearing, apprehends its object without being intimately affected by it. Knowledge through

love, however, is profoundly experiential and, as with the senses of taste, touch and smell, involves contact between the perceiver and the perceived.¹³⁵ The intellectual faculty reaches its term - the apex intellectus - at the penultimate cherubim stage of the contemplative ascent, but the affective power which predominates throughout the progress to union, remains operative to the final seraphim stage.¹³⁶ The unitive experience is thus achieved through the power of love, in the apex affectus. In both the apex intellectus and the apex affectus, which Gallus locates in the third mansion, the domain of synderesis, the purely natural faculties of knowledge and love as they operate in respect of created phenomena are superseded through grace; here the soul apprehends God ecstatically in unitive wisdom - sapientia, knowledge-in-love, rather than discursive knowledge which is scientia - in excessum mentis. In his commentary on the fourth chapter of the De Divinis Nominibus, for example, he says of the experience of union in the apex affectus:

... Unde iste amor dicitur extaticus vel extasim faciens, quia elevat apicem affectionis super omnem intellectualem cognitionem. Per istum amorem excedunt perfecti, et dicuntur rapi in excessum mentis: Cor. v c sive mente excedimus Deo:... In isto amore fundatur portio Marie que non auferetur ad ea, - Luc. x g - quia caritas nunquam excidit - Cor. XIII d; et hec portio est sapientia Christianorum, quam tractat (M 93 rl) magnus Dionisius Areopagita in mistica theologia, que incomparabiliter excedit ens et unum et omnem sapientiam intellectualem, sicut in expositione illius libri ante annos x declaravimus. Huius practica tractatur in canticis, sicut super eundem librum tractavimus.¹³⁷

Gallus' concept of the unitive experience is thus emphatically super-intellectual, and in his Spectacula Contemplationis he underlines his divergence in this respect from traditional Victorine contemplative theory as it was formulated by Richard, which envisages union through the higher function of the intellect, the intelligentia:¹³⁸

Contemplatio est, secundum Priorem Richardum, libera mentis perspicacia in sapientie spectacula cum ammiracione suspensa, haec est descriptio contemplacionis intellectualis, intra mentis excessum. Superintellectualis vero et unitiva, que est summum exercitium tam hominum quam angelorum, secundum quod scribi potest, continetur in mistica theologia, que est sapientiae Christianorum, quam apostolis loquebatur inter perfectos.¹³⁹

He upholds the Dionysian principle of divine unknowability, and stresses that God is fundamentally incomprehensible to men - even at the seraphim stage of the contemplative ascent - and angels alike. Thus, in his Commentary on Isaias, he states,

Illi vero fervores fulgidi seu fulgores fervidi quos experitur affectus, nec potest comprehendere vel estimare intellectus, ordinem seraphym constituunt; nec se possunt angelici ordines ultra istum extendere, quia non potest divina plenitudo aliquo sublimiori modo angelis vel hominibus innotescere.¹⁴⁰

But - and here he tempers Dionysian theology in its original form - he consistently affirms the cognitive power of love, and hence he proposes that while there cannot be intellectual knowledge of the Godhead, He is nevertheless accessible to the face-to-face and ever increasing knowledge-in-love which is anticipated in the contemplative experience and fulfilled in the beatific vision of the men and angels. Thus, commenting on the Dionysian injunction "Videre et cognoscere" (in the translation of Sarracenus), Gallus interprets sight and knowledge of God as an awareness of the divine presence which obtains in complete independence of the intellect:

Videre et cognoscere: id est, presencialiter cognoscere. Visus siquidem pro quolibet sensu ponitur ... Ipsa intellectualis cognicionis remocio quodammodo inducit ad superintellectualem cognicionem.¹⁴¹

Similarly, the Dionysian concept of unknown knowledge becomes, for Gallus, a fulness of knowledge-in-love. Some of the key texts which

substantiate this point are assembled and commented on by Father

Walsh:

If the soul, at the summit of contemplation, enters the cloud, and knows only by unknowing, this is because the object of the intellect is being. So Thomas dutifully repeats the Dionysian metaphysic. But Denis is St. Paul's disciple: hence the Divine darkness is the scriptural darkness - which Thomas finds more congenial. For Christ is the light which shines in this darkness - 'tenebrae sicut meridies', 'nox illuminata mea in deliciis meus'. It is the scriptural fact, the scriptural paradox, to which he returns so often; on the one hand 'videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate': on the other 'qui diligit me, ei manifestabo me ipsum'.

'Dicendum quod quamdiu Deiformis anima dependentiam habeat a propriis corpore, non poterit Deum immediate contemplari'. Here is the difference between the summit of contemplation and the beatific vision - that in patria there is clear comprehension. For some of his contemporaries, the clear teaching of Denis is the absolute unknowability of the Divine essence; and certainly this was the view of John Scot Erigena. But Thomas never has any doubts on the matter. Though the Angels and the Blessed cannot penetrate the profundity of the Infinite Wisdom, they see God face to face:

'Verum tamen et angeli et anime primam stolam accipientes, Deum in propria specie contemplatur, et comprehendunt facie ad faciem; sed infinitatem divine profunditatis et altitudinis sola penetrat omnipotens sapientia. Sicut nos solem corporeum in propria specie videmus, sed penetrare non sufficimus; quamvis iustius visionis ad illam non sit digna comparatio'. (D.N. cI).

In the beatific vision, that is, knowledge-in-love still has primacy, and knowledge according to the intellect is superseded. Even the angels themselves do not proceed beyond those 'loving splendours' which the deified soul experiences in the seraphim mentis:

... 'erimus participantes intelligibilibus luminis datione ipsius', quoad claram contemplationem stole anime eius et ipsius divinitatis; et hoc dupliciter, sc., mente et unitione que est super mentem. Unde ait, 'mente impassabile' - per stolam suam: 'immateriali' - per naturam etiam glorificatam; et 'unitione' que est 'super mentem' capiente divina altius quam mens, quia unit animum plenitudini toti desirabili et nulla proportione intelligibili. Habet enim ipsa unitio experientiam superintellectualem, et in via et in patria. 'Ignotus', quia superintellectualibus, sicut dicit mistica theologia Ib 'ignote consurge' etc; 'immissionibus superclarorum radiorum': ad quos, tanquam in infinitum super nos collocatos, non valemus ascendere; sed divina bonitas, quasi se deponendo, nobis immittit, et radicos

infiniti et incomprehensibilis splendoris specie sue ingignit;
et hoc fiet 'immitatione supercelestium mentium' angelorum:
sc., 'diviniore', id est, magis nos assimilante Deo et plenius
nos deificante quam cognito intellectualis, etiam per speciem'.
(D.N. cI)

This is perhaps the clearest exposition in all Thomas' writings of the way in which he interprets the Dionysian darkness. Only God can comprehend the depths of his own wisdom - the excessive brightness dazzles and blinds all other intelligences. But by the 'marvellous miracle of love' the Divine Goodness adapts itself to the affection of the soul which leaves herself to go out to it; and there in the darkness - in the excess of mind, the overpassing of the intellect; and there is the union, there is the comprehension 'all to the full'; there is the manifestation of Christ, who is the power of God and the Wisdom of God - in this love which is poured out by the Spirit of God - 'qui diligit me'.¹⁴²

As Walsh intimates, Gallus' reappraisal of the Dionysian concept of unitive knowledge has significant implications for language. It entails a reinterpretation of the Dionysian image of divine darkness: Gallus, indeed, follows the earlier translators and commentators on the De Mystica Theologia in embedding the Dionysian concept of darkness firmly within the scriptural context of the Moses narrative. He reaffirms the biblical association, by identifying this darkness with the mystical night of the Canticle. Thus the term 'darkness' no longer has a purely logical status, as denoting God's transcendence of finite concepts and intellectual knowledge. Nor, again as in the original scheme of Ps.-Dionysius, does it denote excess of light in a predominantly conceptual sense. It is true that Ps.-Dionysius' theory of mystical union - the soul's encounter with God in the darkness of unknowing, which is identified as an excess of divine light - allows that the unitive state is in some sense cognitive, an apprehension of the light: it is suggested, moreover, that the mystical experience is to be achieved by a special unitive faculty - κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον ἐνούμενος.¹⁴³

For Gallus, however, mystical darkness represents the transcendent light in which the soul experiences union with God through love and is infused with the wisdom, sapientia Christianorum, which supersedes

intellectual modes of knowledge. Indeed, the negative dialectic of Dionysian theology as a whole does not dominate Gallus' works; characteristically, he exploits it to argue the inaccessibility of God to the powers of human reason, but it is everywhere qualified by the positive devotional language which describes the soul's loving aspirations to union and is appropriate to the degree of knowledge-in-love which complements the soul's progress to unitive awareness.

Clearly, therefore, Gallus formulated his own theory of mystical knowledge, which attempts to resolve the questions concerning the cognitive element in the unitive experience which exercised theologians of both the Augustinian and Dionysian schools. He also evolved an effective definition of the traditional notion of the scintilla synderesis - the unitive impulse whereby the soul ascends to God as swiftly and directly as a spark shooting from fire.¹⁴⁴ The scintilla as an image loosely designating the unitive faculty was widely current, and Gallus introduced needed precision into this area of contemplative theology by establishing the distinction between synderesis and its spark:

Scintilla siquidem apicis affectualis, que est principalis et pura participacio divine bonitatis, que fluit de veritate in ymaginem, ab omni inferioritate ineffabiliter separata; et quasi in vitam divinam transiens, quodam modo ineffabili deificatur.¹⁴⁵

Here Gallus describes the momentary experience of full deifying union - which may cut across the normal hierarchic progression of the soul to the third mansion, the domain of synderesis, where God's presence is felt in an ecstasy of love - when the soul briefly passes out of itself through the intervention of divine grace and is granted a foretaste of the beatific vision which is its ultimate goal.

Von Ivanka, assessing Gallus' unitive theology in his article "Apex Mentis", detects some blurring of the functions of knowledge and love at the highest levels of the mystic ascent:

Das Verhältnis der beiden seelischen Grundkräfte, des theoricus intellectus und des principalis affectus, wird ganz im Sinne Wilhelms von St. Thierry so gedacht, daß sie auf ihrem Gipfel in der Anschauung Gottes ineinander verschmelzen.¹⁴⁶

Whilst there seems no reason to infer any uncertainty or inconsistency here on Gallus' part - and this is especially true of his most mature works - von Ivanka rightly emphasizes the cognitive element in Gallus' theory of union in the affection. For Gallus, the affection is itself a faculty of knowledge and union in the apex affectus is a fulfilment of knowledge-in-love.¹⁴⁷ There is, of course, a clear distinction between the natural functions of knowledge and love as they operate in the course of the contemplative ascent and their role in the third mansion of synderesis, but it is equally apparent that Gallus presupposes some continuity between the natural and super-natural modes of cognition, and, indeed, that the natural are the necessary foundation for the super-natural faculties whereby God is ultimately apprehended. Thus the concept of apex mentis, the unitive faculty, can only be understood against a background of the Dionysian progress through the hierarchies of the mind, although it is in some sense dissociated from the preceding ascent. Walsh, moreover, argues further that the intellectual faculty itself is necessarily reenergised following its transcendence at the cherubim stage of the ascent (the apex intellectus) through the power of unitive love:

For love is the first movement of the man who is restored in Christ; a human love which dilates the heart even as it purifies the mind; which never ceases to be human even when it is divinised; and if it is to be fed by a knowledge which falls away as the love

reaches a pitch of intensity which is perfect, and is yet capable of indefinite expansion, that same unitive love will revitalize the understanding and the will, perfecting their natural operations, and even their natural functions.¹⁴⁸

Hugh of Balma: the isolation of the mystical faculty and the unitive way.

It is because of this element of interdependence and continuity between the natural and supernatural modes of knowledge in Gallus' theology that von Ivanka regards his isolation of the mystical faculty as incomplete. He credits instead the Viae Syon Lugent of the Carthusian Hugh of Balma - a work firmly committed to the negative mystical tradition and heavily influenced by Gallus' interpretation of Dionysian theology - with the achievement of the formal dissociation of knowledge in the apex mentis from all other modes and faculties of cognition:

Worauf es ihm besonders ankommt, was er am meisten betont, ist daß der Weg zur mystischen Erkenntnis Gottes nicht über das denkende Erkennen führt (selbst nicht in dem Sinne, daß dieses auf seiner Höhe, bei seiner Vollendung, in die liebende Anschauung übergehen könnte), sondern von allem Anfang an einen anderen Weg zu Gott neben dem Erkennen bedeutet. Er sagt ausdrücklich: 'Licet in humanis primo oporteat intelligere quam affici' (das augustinische Prinzip: 'quod quisque prorsus ignorat, amare nullo pacto potest' (De Trin. XI, 1), wird hier ausdrücklich negiert, bzw. auf alles, was nicht Gott ist, eingeschränkt), 'in vera tamen et experimentalis cognitione divinorum oportet primum sentire per amorem quam ipsum Deum qui sentitur intelligendo cogitare. Ergo oportet consurgere per amorem, ut ex isto statu cognitionis in ipsa mente vera cognitio relinquatur' - ja das Ausschließen jeder gedanklichen Tätigkeit, von allem Anfang an, ist eine Vorbedingung der mystischen Erkenntnis. Nur die Liebe selbst, ohne jede Erkenntnis, hat sich hier zu ihrem Ziel zu erheben...¹⁴⁹

Hugh of Balma, von Ivanka argues, conceives of the contemplative ascent in purely experiential terms as a single autonomous movement of love, culminating in loving knowledge of the Divine Essence. The way of love proceeds, according to Hugh, without regard to the intellect. He thus took to an uncompromising conclusion the theory of contemplative union in an ecstasy of love which Gallus had evolved from his grounding in the Dionysian and Victorine traditions of mystical theology but which

still reserved a role for the intellect in both the ascent to loving union and thereafter in the unitive experience itself.

The Viae Syon Lugent is organized around the threefold division of the contemplative way into the purgative, illuminative and unitive stages, and the whole is supplemented by a debate in the scholastic manner, the Quaestio Unica, which presents the theoretical basis for the practical account of contemplation which comprises the body of the treatise.¹⁵⁰ The three major sections of the text are also associated with the traditional classification of contemplatives as "incipientes", "proficientes" and "perfecti",¹⁵¹ and, under the influence of St. Bernard's sermons on the Canticle, with the successive kisses of the feet, hands and mouth which are interpreted as denoting the three stages leading to union with the Divine Spouse.¹⁵²

The evidence of the many extant fifteenth century manuscripts of the Viae Syon Lugent testifies to its widespread popularity and influence on the continent - particularly among the Carthusians. In England, however, it does not seem to have enjoyed such currency. P.S. Jolliffe, in his article "Two Middle English Tracts on the Contemplative Life", records only two extant manuscripts of English provenance which incorporate the text (MSS Trinity College, Cambridge B. 14. 25 and Caius College, Cambridge 353¹⁵³) and notes that Syon Abbey had the treatise in MS. M. 116.¹⁵⁴ Michael G. Sargent's article, "The Transmission by the English Carthusians of some late Medieval Spiritual Writings",¹⁵⁵ adds a further two manuscripts to this list: Douai Bibliothèque Municipale MS 396 and Douce MS 262, which contains only part of the section on the unitive way, under the heading Exposicio super quedam verba libri beati Dionisii de Mystica Theologia.¹⁵⁶ Both these manuscripts are Carthusian

products: the Douai MS was written by J. London of Sheen,¹⁵⁷ and Douce 262 - a compilation of Dionysian texts, which also includes the Cloud of Unknowing, the Book of Privy Counselling and the De Septem Gradibus Contemplacionis of Thomas Gallus - was the work of William Tregooze (+1514) and Andrew Boorde of the London Charterhouse and was annotated by James Grenehalgh.¹⁵⁸ Extracts from the Viae Syon Lugent, combined with passages from English mystical treatises - which include the only known borrowings from the Cloud Corpus - comprise the related texts Of Actyfe Lyfe & Contemplatyfe Declaracion and Via ad Contemplacionem which occur in the Carthusian manuscripts B M Add. MSS 37049 (ff 87b-89b) and 37790 (ff 234a-236a) respectively, and are printed and discussed in Jolliffe's article. It is interesting to note here that manuscript evidence points to a tendency to associate the Cloud Corpus with the Viae Syon Lugent in Carthusian circles during the later Middle Ages. The possible implications of this for the provenance of the English texts will be assessed in the concluding chapter. Here, however, the doctrinal grounds for considering Hugh as a probable intermediary in the transmission of Dionysian theology between Gallus and the Cloud will be the focus of attention.

Hugh cannot be regarded as a significant innovator in the field of mystical language. Clearly the linguistic tradition which had grown up in conjunction with Dionysian negative theology was already firmly established, and Hugh accordingly reproduces its characteristic patterns and adopts the Latin terminology of the later translations of the Greek Corpus. The following description of unitive awareness which occurs in the third section of the text is representative of his practice:

Sapientia, est dignissima Dei cognito, per ignorantiam cognita,

secundum unionem, quae est supra mentem, quando mens ab omnibus aliis recedens, postea seipsam dimittens unita est super splendentibus radiis inscrutabili, & profundo sapientiae splendore illuminata. (669 Col. I B).

He draws less on the "super-" vocabulary of the Dionysian Corpus, however, than on its negative and paradoxical forms - inevitably so, perhaps, since his principal concern is with the conditions under which the soul achieves union with the transcendent God rather than with the philosophy of divine transcendence itself.

In general, indeed, Hugh's is the latinized, thoroughly Christianized Ps.-Dionysius of the later translators and commentators. He is particularly and pervasively influenced by Thomas Gallus' interpretation of Dionysian theology. Both give prominence, for example, to the sapientia Christianorum which is the highest achievement of the contemplative, and they agree in identifying this with the part which Mary chose:

haec sapientia quae est omnia.. portio Mariae, quae amoris dilecti igne succensa ardebat desiderio. (679 Col. IIE).

Similarly, Hugh echoes Gallus' association of the De Mystica Theologia with the Canticle; commenting on Ps.-Dionysius' injunction to his disciple Timothy, "Consurge ignote...", Hugh turns to the Canticle for its practical application of the Dionysian theory of ascent through unknowing:

Vnde ista consurrectio, quae per ignorantiam dicitur, nihil aliud est, nisi immediate moueri per ardorem amoris sine omnis creaturae speculo, absque breuia cogitatione, sine etiam motu intelligentiae concomitante: vt solus affectus tangat, & in ipso actuali exercitio nihil cognoscat speculatiua cognitio, & ille est oculus, quo sponsus in canticis à sponsa dicitur vulnerari. (679 Col. I C-D)

Through this bringing to bear of the Canticum on Dionysian theology, moreover, Hugh clearly endorses Gallus' interpretation of the unknown knowledge of the De Mystica Theologia as an experiential knowledge of God whose medium is love. Gallus' distinction between the affective and intellectual powers of the soul is also fundamental to Hugh's theology, and it is perhaps in respect of his emphasis on the primacy of the loving power in the ascent to contemplative union that Gallus influenced the development of Hugh's theory of the unitive faculty most profoundly. Thus, commenting on a passage from the De Divinis Nominibus VII where Ps.-Dionysius celebrates the Sovereign Wisdom, the "sapientiam excedentem", as the source and possessor of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Hugh writes,

vbi per sapiéntiam, & cognitionem completa vtriusque potentiae perfectio denotatur affectione, scilicet & intellectione. Ipsam enim vocat irrationabilié, quia nec ipsam ratio apprehendit, nec ratione inuestigando vtitur: amentem etiam vocat, id est, sine mente, & sine intellectu, quia nec ipsa in suo exercitio vtitur intellectu, quia vsque ad tam summam cognitioné intellectus peruenire non sufficit: stultam etiam vocat, quia sine vsu omnimodae intelligentiae in affectu ista sapientia consurgit, quam nulla intelligentia penitus apprehédit. (679 Col. II B-C)

Here Hugh differentiates wisdom, sapientia, from knowledge, cognitio. The latter is within the scope of the human intellectual powers, but sapientia, the unitive wisdom which God alone imparts, is accessible only through the superior loving power and denotes a loving awareness of God which transcends the discursive knowledge achieved through the intellect.

The Viae Syon Lugent, it has been noted, restates the traditional threefold division of the contemplative way. Hugh summarizes the distinctions between the different stages in his Prologue to the text:

Triplex est igitur via ista ad Deum, scilicet purgatiua, qua

mens ad discendam veram sapientiam disponitur. Secunda vero illuminatiua dicitur, qua mens cogitando ad amoris inflammationem accenditur. Tertia unitiua, qua mens super omnem intellectum, rationem, & intelligentiam à solo Deo sursum actu dirigitur.
(658, Col. I E)

To enter the unitive way, Hugh insists, the soul must slough off all intellectual activities. Equally, however, Hugh's account of the progress to union allocates some function to the intellectual faculties in the preliminary stages of the ascent. Some assessment of the relationship of the purgative and illuminative to the unitive ways is therefore needed to reconcile this definition with Hugh's claim to have isolated the mystical faculty and defined the unitive way as the way of love alone.

Hugh echoes Gallus and anticipates the author of the Cloud Corpus in condemning what his Prologue labels "inutilibus curiositatibus" (658 Col I A); he compares the scholarly urge to excel in diverse branches of science to the Israelites' veneration of false idols, since it can only obstruct the acquisition of true wisdom. It is, however, the function of the purgative and illuminative stages to prepare the soul for its flight to loving union with God, and here it must be schooled to exploit but at last transcend the intellect's power to promote unitive awareness. Hugh insists that at this level the intellect is a necessary stimulus to love, since the soul is not yet sufficiently experienced in the way of love to proceed to union unassisted. Recommending the need for anagogical study of scripture at the illuminative stage, Hugh argues,

Quia adhuc mens proficiens est indisposita, ad hoc, quod expedite feratur affectionibus anagogicis in dilectum, oportet quod primo aliquantulum meditatur eomodo, quo dictum est; vt per cogitationem preuiam aliquantulum incipiat scintillando affici in illum, in quem in tertio statu sine omni cogitatione

concomitante, vel praeuia, quotiescumque vult sine obstaculo sursum eleuatur. Ad quam expeditionem cum perfecte poterit attingere, omnis ab ipsa sapientia in sua consurrectione cogitatio, vel meditatio abscindetur; quia cogitatio ibi non est, nisi vt per ipsam affectio accendatur. Sic ergo vsualiter per meditationem praedictam proficiat: primo sicut dictum est, proprietatem vocabuli ad sensum anagogicum transferat; postea illud ad amorem reducat; tertio, quod in ipso Deo afficiatur.

(668 Col. I B-C)

The contemplative is similarly directed to study creation as a means of discovering its creator; to attain a receptive state of perfect humility by meditating on personal sin and on the goodness of God - particularly as manifested in the Passion - to practise aspirations to God through prayer, in order to earn special grace to aid its progress to loving union. The second chapter, which focusses on the illuminative way, is largely taken up with an anagogical analysis of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer which teaches the soul this exercise.¹⁵⁹ It also comprises a formal account of the moral basis for the contemplative way, which follows the Dionysian principle of hierarchic ascent as it was developed by Thomas Gallus. Ultimately, however, the effect of meditation on subjects inferior to God is to dissipate the soul's effort and distract it from its single desire for union; the intercourse with the body weighs down the soul which of itself tends naturally to God. Hugh compares the soul's attempt to find God through creation with the Bride's futile search for her Beloved in the night when the darkness obscures Him (Cant. 3).¹⁶⁰ In the purgative and illuminative ways, the soul is purified and the intellect enlightened. Far from dismissing this stage of the ascent, Hugh consistently emphasizes its difficulties and the need to exert every effort to bring it to good effect.¹⁶¹ But he stresses that the principal function of the spiritual exercises undertaken at this level is to stimulate the love which will carry the soul to union where the intellect cannot penetrate.

In his demarcation of the purgative and illuminative ways, Hugh therefore recognizes the soul's ability to achieve a kind of speculative contemplation, "contemplatio speculatiua" (681 Col. I A-B), through the exercise of its natural affective and intellectual powers.¹⁶² In this sphere thought activates and anticipates love. By contrast, Hugh denies any preceding or accompanying movement of the intellect once the soul has entered the way of union:

... per cogitationem preuiam aliquantulum incipiat scintillando affici in illum, in quem in tertio statu sine omni cogitatione concomitante, vel praeuia, quotiescumque vult sine obstaculo sursum eleuatur. (668 Col. I B).

This is the claim which Hugh systematically substantiates in the Quaestio Unica.¹⁶³ He first presents the case for presuming knowledge to be the necessary forerunner of love. One of his principal authorities for this is St. Augustine:

Item Augustinus: Inuisa possumus diligere, incognita autem nequaquam: ergo primo oportet ratiocinando, vel intellectualiter cogitando cognoscere, antequam affectu amoris aliquod diligatur: cogitatio igitur affectionem amoris necessario praecedit. (683 Col I B-C),

and corroborates the point by references to Psalm 39.3, De Divinis Nominibus VII and the Dionysian theory of the hierarchies. Hugh himself endorses this argument insofar as perception of natural phenomena is concerned. Where, however, the soul's object transcends its intellectual capacity and can only be experienced through mystical union - the situation which Ps.-Dionysius describes in the De Mystica Theologia - he insists that the natural order of cognition is reversed. Love must here precede knowledge, and whatever intellectual enlightenment is then granted to the soul necessarily derives from its loving adhesion to God. Returning to the Dionysian concept of the angelic hierarchy as it was

interpreted by Gallus, Hugh reaffirms that the seraphim are closer to God than the cherubim - the potentia amandi is nearer than the potentia intellectus - and it is the seraphim who transmit their immediate affective knowledge of God to the secondary order of cherubim.¹⁶⁴ Hence,

Cum ergo solus amor faciat animam appropinquare ad Deum per sui extensionem: igitur in quantum mens amat attentius, in quantum fonti luminis appropinquat, & per consequens in quantum propinquior est fonti luminis per amorem, in quantum plus intellectus illuminatur ab eo per cognitionem. Primo igitur in diuinis est ardendo amare, quam intelligendo cognoscere. (684 Col. II D).

Hugh's contemplative theology is thus profoundly experiential. Its watchword is the text of Psalm 33.9, where the soul is invited to taste God before it enjoys sight of Him:

Item Psalmista: Gustate & videte, &c. Cum igitur gustare affectum respiciat amoris, videre autem intellectus cogitationem, vel meditationem: ergo primo oportet motu amoris consurgere, quam occultissimum Deum intellectualiter cogitando cognoscere. Nam haec est regula generalis in mystica Theologia, quod primo oportet habere practicam, quam theoreticam, id est, vsum exercitij in corde, quam ipsius rei, vel eorum quae dicuntur habere notitiam. (684 Col. I D-E).

The corollary of this is that in unitive theology, unlike other sciences, experience must precede verbal formulation and vicarious knowledge through contemplative literature, for, he claims,

Haec enim sapientia in hoc differt ab omnibus aliis scientiis, quia in hac primo oportet vsum habere in seipso, quae verba intelligere, & practica hic praecedat theoreticam. In alijs scientijs necesse est, primo verba intelligere, quam quae addiscitur, scientia habeatur. (658 Col. IIE- 659 Col. I A).¹⁶⁵

The unitive way, as Hugh interprets it, has two phases. His classification derives from the opening chapter of the De Mystica Theologia, where Ps.-Dionysius urges his disciple to abandon finally

everything pertaining to the senses or intellect and enter completely into the way of unknowing;

et, sicut est possibile, ignote consurge ad ejus unitionem qui est super omnem substantiam et cognitionem. Etenim excessu tui ipsius et omnium irretentibili et absoluto munde, ad supersubstantialem divinarum tenebrarum radium, cuncta auferens et a cunctis absolutus sursum ageris. (S. 568-569)

With this as the framework for his contemplative theory and terminology, Hugh formulates his own unitive theology in commenting at length on the De Mystica Theologia in the third chapter of the Viae Syon Lugent:

... per amorem ardentissimum disponente, ardentissime facit in dilectum suis extensionibus sursum actiuis consurgere: quae Mystica Theologia tradita in apice affectiuae consurgit, quae consurrectio ignorata, vel per ignorantiam dicitur, vt remoto omnis imaginationis, rationis, intellectus, vel intelligentiae exercitio, per vnitionem ardentissimi amoris id sentiat in praesenti, quod intelligentia capere non sufficit: immo quod potius est, omnis speculatiua cognitio totaliter ignorat. (679 Col. I E- II A).

He reiterates his identification of the way of unknowing as the way of love. The soul, having once broken free from the restraining influences of the senses and intellect and entered into the way of love, now operates above itself in the apex affectus where the stimulus of thought is superfluous. Hugh consistently differentiates the faculty of unitive love from the love which stirs the soul in the earlier stages of the contemplative ascent:

... per amorem excessiuum cogentem limites transcendere naturales, ipsi vnitur ecstastica amoris consurrectione, à quo primordialiter exiuit... (669 Col. II A).

Unitive love is essentially ecstatic and deifying: Hugh distinguishes it from the natural power of the affection by the intensity of the language which he applies to it - it is the apex affectus, "amor", "desiderium", "ardentissimus". He stresses the difficulties which

the novice in the mystic way experiences in learning to exercise its faculty of unitive love. It must practise loving aspirations to union until its love, which is still imperfect and relapses repeatedly after momentarily nearing its object, is capable of sustaining contemplation of the divine:

Item mens beata continuo, & indiuisibili exercitio in ipso summo bono veluti aeterno dulcore afficitur, haec tamen modo interscalari, & interciso in ipsum consurgit, cuius motus rectissime est ad instar emissionis sideris scintillantantis, si illae emissiones ex libera voluntate procederent: quia illi motus anagogici sunt quasi subitanei, vt statim post consurrectionem mens infra seipsam inferius prolabatur, iterum et iterum consurgit, & iterum infra seipsam cadit. (670 Col. I A-B).
Et per istam diuturniorum motuum anagogicorum cósurrectionem, magis ac magis affectus extéditur, & quasi quibusdam flámeis scintillis mens purgatur efficacius. (682 Col. I B).

It must also now exert itself to stifle not only all intellectual speculations on the divine mysteries, but even the inherent tendency of the intelligence to apprehend the object of the affection:

totaliter oculú intellectus rescindere oportet, quia in ipsa consurrectione semper vult illud apprehédere, ad quod tendit affectio. Vnde, maxima aduersatio in ista consurrectione est vehemens inhaerentia intellectus cum affectu, quam tamen rescindere necesse est per magnú exercitium. (681 Col I C).

The soul at this stage, though assisted by divine grace, principally effects its own ascent: this is reflected in the active mood of "consurge". But its capacity to achieve union is necessarily limited and for this reason, Hugh affirms, Ps.-Dionysius qualifies his injunction with "sicut est possibile". In the second phase of the unitive way, however, the Holy Spirit intervenes; the loving impulse is purified and the work which the soul began is divinely perfected. The pattern agrees with Gallus' account of the progressive dominance of grace in the contemplative way. The soul is at last passively raised to contemplative awareness - hence the use of the passive voice in "sursum

ageris":

Vnde primo dicit: 'Consurge ignote': & post hoc dicit:
'Sursum ageris'. quasi diceret, quod in principio exercitij
consurrectionum anagogicarum affectus apex cum difficultate
cósurgit, sed per amorem excessuum ipsius supra se, & per
efficaciorem purgationem quasi sine difficultate ad libitum
consurgit, & motuú agilitate mirabiliter leuigatur: vt licet
in ipso motu anagogico natura, & amor pariter concurrat, tamen
efficacius iam remotis impedimétiis, & exinde maiori immissione
desuper adueniente, multo plus ardor amoris, quam vigor affectus
naturalis facilitatem: et agilitatem motuum incomparabiliter
operetur. & hoc est quod dicebatur, 'Cuncta auferens, etc....
(682 Col. I C).

The soul now aspires spontaneously, quicker than thought ('mira
velocitate motuum citius etiá quam cogitare valeat ratione' 681 Col.
1 E) and almost at will to the unitive experience which is proper to
the perfect:

vt quotiescumque vult, moueatur ardentissime in Deum: sic etiam,
vt orans affectionum desiderio in métiis affectu quantum possibile
est in via, sic attente exoret, ac si ipsum videret facie ad faciem.
(681 Col. II D).

Hugh, therefore, conceives of mystical union as the culmination
of the way of love - the end of the practice of loving aspirations to
which he applies the traditional term "extensio":

més... se extendit in ardore motuum vnionem dilecti desiderans.
(676 Col. II D).

It takes place in the apex affectus, where the soul is infused with
divine wisdom which transcends the sphere of the intellect:

Vnde tota ista sapientia in hoc solo perficitur, vt ipsa
affectiua in suo supremo apice constituta, per abscisionem
totius intellectualis operationis nihil aliud, quam soli Deo
vniri desiderat. (681 Col. II C-D).

Hugh follows Gallus in identifying this with the scintilla synderesis

as the faculty for mystical knowledge:

...principalis affectio: & ipsa est scintilla synderesis...
(680 Col. I D).

Indeed, the image of the spark epitomizes for Hugh the action of the loving aspirations which progressively unite the soul to God:

... quando ista vis animae suprema, quae est apex affectus, tágitur ab igne amoris, illo motu & tactu scintillat affectus aspirando in Deú..
(686 Col. II E).

He affirms, moreover, that the impulse of love which propels the contemplative to union in this life continues into the afterlife, and that unitive wisdom here anticipates the beatific vision in which the Blessed experience the divine presence throughout eternity. This, he claims, is the significance of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer:

Petit etiam 'hodie', hoc est, in praesenti vita, ratione aeternitatis, quae est simplex, & vnica, quae in amore viuentibus incipit in praesenti vita: quia amor ille quo sponsus in vita ista diligitur, idem est numero cum illo, quo in aeternitate gloriae gubernatori omnium vnietur.
(665 Col. I D).

Hugh, therefore, maintains the autonomy of the way of love. Unlike Gallus, he insists that, from its inception, it is completely dissociated from the intellect. He emphasizes the purely affective experiential character of unitive awareness:

... per vnitionem ardentissimi amoris id sentiat in praesenti, quod intelligentia capere non sufficit. (679 Col. I E - II A).

Through love, the soul achieves immediate experience of the unknowable being of God in a state of intellectual ignorance or unknowing, when the noetic powers are superseded. This experience is identified as the wisdom of Christians which Paul preached to his disciple Dionysius

and which only God himself, without intermediary, imparts to the soul:

Sapientia, est dignissima Dei cognitio, per ignorantiam cognita, secundum vnionem, quae est supra mentem, quando mens ab omnibus aliis recedens, postea seipsam dimittens vnita est super splendentibus radiis inscrutabili, & profundo sapientiae splendore illuminata...

Consurrectio ergo per vnitiui amoris affectiones flammigeras, supra omne officium intellectus in supremo affectiuae apice constituta, ipsa est sapientia intenta ad praesens, quae idem est quod Mystica Theologia, qua ipsa mens ignita, linguis affectionum occultissime dilectum alloquitur, quae non alicuius mortalis industria referatur, sed solum diuina miseratione seipsam manifeste prodit... (669 Col. I B-C).

Hugh reaffirms the inaccessibility of the unitive experience to intellectual comprehension and thus to linguistic formulation, and reproduces the traditional Dionysian terminology which reflects both the actuality of the experience and its essential ineffability. He nevertheless stresses that the beatific vision is complete, face-to-face -

Item mens glorificata in ipso, cuius pulchritudinem facie ad faciem contemplatur, ardentissima vnitione coniungitur. (670 Col. I B) -

and accentuates the cognitive nature of the experience of loving union. He suggests, moreover, that this experiential, indefinable knowledge-in-love which is the fullness of unitive wisdom and obtains independently of the intellectual faculty, is in some way complemented by an enlightenment of the higher function of the intellect, the intelligentia, following the soul's loving union with God. Hugh is scrupulous in his insistence that neither the intellect nor even the intelligentia have any role in the unitive way itself: he affirms that love, and not, as in Victorine theology, the intelligentia,¹⁶⁶ is the medium of unitive knowledge;

Vnde ista consurrectio, quae per ignorantiam dicitur, nihil aliud est, nisi immediate moueri per ardorem amoris sine omnis creaturae speculo, absque breuia cogitatione, sine etiam motu intelligentiae concomitante: vt solus affectus tangat, & in ipso actuali exercitio nihil cognoscat speculatiua cognitio, & ille est oculus, quo sponsus in canticis à sponsa dicitur vulnerari.
(679 Col. I C-D).

Other passages already quoted demonstrate the same distinction of the noetic faculties and equally categoric denial of their involvement in the unitive process: 679 Col. II B-C,¹⁶⁷ for example, differentiates between ratio, mens, intellectus and intelligentia, and 659 Col. I E¹⁶⁸ again distinguishes intellectus, ratio and intelligentia. In the unitive condition, however, the natural order whereby knowledge precedes love is reversed, and the soul receives a kind of knowledge which is further refined and deepened in the beatific vision:

... & licet ibi sint cognitio simul & dilectio, tamen cognitio naturaliter praecedit dilectionem. Sed mens haec huic cōsurrectioni actualiter intendens, prout est hic intentio, omnis rationis, & intelligentiae suis motibus radicatus rescindit officia. Nam intellectus ex cōmunicatione carnis corruptae, phantasiis est admixtus; ideo debet in consurrectione amoris amoueri; sed in patria purgabitur, in qua carnis corruptio deponetur, ideo per solam affectus igniti consurrectionem erigitur, quia ibi affectiua intelligentia incomparabiliter praexcellit, vt iam cito probatur.
(670 Col. I B-C).

Hugh's fullest account of this aspect of his contemplative theology occurs towards the end of the Viae Syon Lugent, where he is commenting on the De Mystica Theologia. He reiterates that just as the natural affection is purified and mysteriously transformed into the love which is the instrument of unitive knowledge, so the intellect is in turn purified through the fire of love and enabled to receive illumination in its higher function, the intelligentia:

... dum tantum humana scientia speculatiua repletur, in comparatione illius sapientiae quae est per supersplendentes diuinos radios, quasi quadam obtebrante caligine obfuscat.

Sed & illud verbum vltimum non tantum de agiliori consurrectione est, sed de cognitione suprema ipsius intelligentiae quia secundum sapiétiam beati Dionysij, illa sola vera est cognitio de diuinis, quę experimétali notitia sursum actiuę consurrectionis relinquitur. Vnde diuina miseratione secundum quod competit, cósurgenti hoc accidit, vt quando mens per multorum téporum curricula aspirauit, vt suum dilectum intimius sibi coniuncta ardentiori vinculo amoris cóstringeret, ad modicum prout capax est, prout fit in raptu, visio beata cóceditur, maxime cum ab irretentibili, & absoluto sit múda, & erigitur tunc ad diuinarum tenebrarum radiú, scilicet lumen diuinae incomprehensibilitatis; quae ibi vocatur tenebra, secundum quod in epistola dicitur ad Timotheum sic: Diuina caligo lumen est inaccessible, in qua habitare Deus dicitur, & inuisibilis quidem existens propter excedentem claritatem, &c. Vnde sapiétia illa est immediate ante cognitionem raptus, & sic diutiús aspiráti à dilecto dicitur. Amice ascéde superius. Vnde primo dicitur: 'Consurge, & ibi sursum ageris': quia in consurrectione vnitiuę sapientiae natura operatur & gratia: in ista autem suprema operatione intelligentiae sola gratia eleuans immediatissime operatur, quantum ad ipsam eleuationem raptus, prout mens sic in corpore erigitur, vt à sensibus corporis sequestretur, cum in ista vltima intelligentiae eleuatione tam intellectiua quam affectiua potissime officium consummatum, non per modum patiendi, sed agendi actum suum obtineant. (682 Col. I D - II A).

Hugh affirms here that the intelligentia is enlightened in rapt vision, for which the soul is primed by its loving adhesión to God and which is granted in proportion to its so acquired capacity to apprehend God. Both the affective and cognitive powers have their final consummation in this experience. This form of knowledge, Hugh insists, is superior to all natural modes of cognition: it differs from them in that it is infused through the sole operation of divine grace while the mind remains passive, and also in that it is not discursive, empirical or speculative. Knowledge of the latter kind, by contrast, can only limit and darken the mind. Hugh distinguishes darkness of this order - which is ignorance - from the concept of divine darkness, which is a darkness of excess, and represents God's transcendence of finite modes of knowledge. He thus describes the infusion of unitive knowledge in terms of spiritual enlightenment by the radiance of God - "diuinis fulgoribus illustretur":

Sapientia est Dei diuinissima cognitio per ignorantiam cognita, & non tantum praeclarior, immo etiam est vniversalior & vtilior alijs scientijs, cognitionibus, & apprehensionibus dicitur. Quae non tantum affectum supra se erigit, & amore ecstático perfecte vnit sponso altissimo creaturam, sed insuper intantum eleuat intellectum, vt multo plus omni prudentia & cognitione diuinis fulgoribus illustretur, quam aliquo ingenij exercitio valeat obtineri. (679 Col. II A-B).

One of the major problems of Hugh's theology, however, is the uncertain relationship of this mode of knowledge to its natural counterpart. The discontinuity between the unitive way and the preparatory purgative and illuminative phases, and the denial of any function for the intellect in the ascent to union and its attainment involves an awkward suspension of the intelligentia until it is reenergised following the unitive experience. Hugh is similarly unspecific as to the nature of the awareness which is possible through the intelligentia: he dissociates its operations from those of the intellect, yet recognizes the one as a higher function of the other; he leaves in doubt, moreover, how the soul understands and articulates its own rapturous experience - as he suggests that it does in 682 Col. II A - through the intelligentia if its operations cannot be evaluated in terms of the intellect.¹⁶⁹ His interpretation of the Dionysian imagery of darkness and light as a metaphor for the soul's unitive knowledge of God, however, owes much to Gallus. Though Hugh's contemplative theology contradicts Gallus' assignment of a necessary role to the intellect in the ascent to union, both authors infer that the mystical encounter with God which Ps.-Dionysius locates in the dark cloud of unknowing is at once a fullness of experiential knowledge-in-love and that it involves a kind of enlightenment in the intelligentia - a claim which takes up the suggestion in the Dionysian Corpus that the soul's union with God in the darkness which represents His excessive brilliance is in some sense cognitive, but reinterprets knowledge of this order as being experiential and purely affective.

IV. The Cloud Corpus and its contemplative theory.

Turning, then, to the Cloud Corpus, there are many points of similarity between the English writer's contemplative theory and the interpretation of Dionysian theology which evolved through Gallus and Hugh of Balma. Walsh cites various examples where agreement on fundamental doctrines and close verbal resemblances suggest that Gallus' mediating influence on the Cloud author extended beyond the translation of the Deonise Hid Diuinite itself. Clearly, the English author is largely dependent on Gallus for his identification and labelling of the soul's principal cognitive faculties as the "louyng mizt" and the "knowyng mizt" and for his affirmation of the primacy of love in the contemplative way:

Bot siþ alle resonable creatures, aungel & man, haþ in hem, ilchone by hemself, o principal worching mizt, þe whiche is clepid a knowable mizt, & anoþer principal worching mizt, þe whiche is clepid a louyng mizt: of þe whiche two miztes, to þe first, þe whiche is a knowyng mizt, God, þat is þe maker of hem, is euermore incomprehensible; & to þe secound, þe whiche is þe louyng mizt, in ilch one diuersly he is al comprehensible at þe fulle, in so mochel þat o louyng soule only in itself, by vertewe of loue, schuld comprehende in it hym þat is sufficient at þe fulle - & mochel more, wiþoute comparison - to fille alle þe soules & aungelles þat euer may be. & þis is þe eendles merueilous miracle of loue, þe whiche schal neuer take eende; for euer schal he do it, & neuer schal he seese for to do it. (Cloud 18/22-19/12).

The passage is strongly reminiscent of the text of Gallus' Commentary on Isaias 6 which was quoted and discussed above,¹⁷⁰ and it is tempting, as Walsh concedes, to deduce that the Cloud author was familiar with Gallus' treatise - possibly in the complete form which no longer survives.¹⁷¹ His conjecture is, in fact, supported by comparison of a slightly later passage from the Latin work,

... Quasi ergo totum Dei affectu suscipitur, et ab intellectu excluditur,¹⁷²

with the sixth chapter of the Cloud,

For whi he may wel be loued, bot not pouȝt. By loue may he
be getyn & holden; bot bi pouȝt neiȝer. (Cloud 26/3-5).

Here the precise correspondence in thought and expression - notably the echo of "suscipitur" in the English image "getyn & holden" - is further accentuated by the remarkable similarity in the crisp, antithetical rhythm of the prose which in both cases reinforces the argument.

Walsh also comments on the recurrence in Privy Counselling of the notion stressed by Gallus that the ecstasy of love through which the soul comes to experience God's presence is a response to the outpouring of divine love which took form in the Incarnation:

... þis listi sleiȝt worching, þe whiche in itself is þe heiȝ
wisdom of þe Godheed graciousli descendyng into mans soule,
knitting it & onyng it vnto himself in goostly sleiȝt & prudence
of spirit... (P.C. 145/3-6).¹⁷³

Both authors lay similar stress on the arduousness of the preliminary stages of the contemplative ascent before this ecstasy is attained. The Cloud author consistently refers to this preparatory process as "werk", and Walsh observes of Gallus that,

Unlike St. Augustine, Thomas seldom speaks of the 'otium contemplationis'; it is essentially the 'negotium sapientiae', always involving intense interior activity - even at its most passive.¹⁷⁴

The process is technically known as extensio: according to Gallus, it is the "precipuum mentis exercitium" which, in the first chapter of his commentary on the De Divinis Nominibus, he claims is variously termed

... ascensiones... excessus, extensionis... consurrectionis,

immissionis, elevationis super mentem... suspensionis...¹⁷⁵

It is interesting, therefore, that the English author's alternative expressions for the contemplative effort are paralleled in this list.

In Cloud 61/1-2, for example,

& whoso wile be a parfite dissiple of oure Lordes, him behouip
streyne up his spirite in þis werk goostly,

the compound "streyne up" closely reproduces the term "extensio"
itself.¹⁷⁶ More strikingly, the use of "heng up" in such contexts
as Cloud 46/15-17,

& þefore sche heng up hir loue & hir longing desire in þis
cloude of unknowing, & lernid hir to loue a þing þe whiche
sche mizt not se cleerly in þis liif bi lizt of vnderstondyng
in hir reson...

is reminiscent of the metaphorical application of "suspensio" which
Gallus records here. Indeed, the Cloud as a whole embodies Gallus'
precept that the soul cannot receive direction in the mystic way
beyond the level of contemplation which the soul acquires largely
through its own efforts. Walsh aptly comments,

'Working' or 'work', is the name given to extension by the
author of the Cloud of Unknowing, which is really a treatise
on this 'chief contemplative exercise'.¹⁷⁷

Inevitably, however, while in some cases it seems certain that
the Cloud author's debt was to Gallus himself, the considerable overlap
between Gallus' theology and that of his disciple Hugh often obscures
the precise source of derivative elements in the English texts. The
extent to which Hugh was demonstrably a direct influence on the Cloud
Corpus and not merely its counterpart as a milestone in the evolution
of the Dionysian mystical tradition may, therefore, best be determined

by establishing the closest affinities of the English works in respect of their unitive theology - the area in which the most significant divergences between Gallus and Hugh occur.

The Cloud of Unknowing and its companion treatise, the Book of Privy Counselling differ in form and conception from their principal sources of theology, and present correspondingly distinct and often more intractable problems of interpretation than their superficially more complex antecedents. Both texts are compiled in the first instance as personal letters of direction in the contemplative life. They are practically orientated to the spiritual needs and capacity of their recipient, and accordingly lack any systematic attempt to propound a complete coherent theological schema. Indeed, while their achievement in introducing Dionysian mystical theology in readily assimilable form to a vernacular audience is remarkable, they make and have little claim to be considered as significantly innovatory texts in respect of the theory of contemplation. Their author has clearly read widely and discriminatingly in the field of mystical literature, and his grasp of the key issues dividing the main schools of mystical thought, and his awareness of his own standpoint in relation to them, seem sure. He uses his knowledge allusively, however, and with regard first and foremost to his prospective readership. There are difficulties, as a result, in piecing together the methodical account of his mystical theology which the author himself declines to include in his treatises.

The impetus for the contemplative ascent, the Cloud author, like Gallus, insists, comes from the will. He identifies it in the fourth chapter as "þe principal worching miȝt of þi soule" (18/4), and later

impresses on his disciple the fundamental need to direct his will into the unitive way of love:

& þerfore lene meekly to þis blinde steryng of loue in þin herte. I mene not in þi bodily herte, bot in þi goostly herte, þe whiche is þi wil. (Cloud 94/19-21)¹⁷⁸

Characteristically, the English texts include no formal detailed exposition of the stages which comprise the contemplative life, though they manifestly assume the traditional threefold division into the purgative, illuminative and contemplative ways. The divisions of the religious life enumerated in Ch. 8 of Cloud -

þe lower party of actiue liif stondeþ in good & honeste bodily werkes of mercy & of charite. þe hier party of actiue liif & þe lower party of contemplatiue liif liþ in goodly goostly meditacions, & besy beholding - vnto a mans owne wrechidnes wiþ sorow & contricion, vnto þe Passion of Crist & of his seruauntes wiþ pite & compassion, & vnto þe wonderful ziftes, kyndnes, & werkes of God in alle his creatures, bodili & goostly, wiþ þankyng & preising. Bot þe hizer partye of contemplacion (as it may be had here) hongep al holy in þis derknes & in þis cloude of vnknowyng, wiþ a louyng steryng & a blinde beholdyng vnto þe nakid beyng of God himself only. (Cloud 31/21-32/8) -

derive from the conflated traditions of Augustinian and Dionysian theology,¹⁷⁹ though the concept of the highest stage and the terminology which describes it are wholly Dionysian. It is notable, moreover, that the English author tends to blur the proper distinctions between outward modes of life within the Church (active or contemplative) with their attendant activities and obligations, and the inner states attained by diverse men living the Christian life (the "beginners", "profiters" and "parfite" alluded to in Cloud, ch. 35) or experienced by a single man at the various stages of his spiritual development. The scheme of a continuous progress to unitive awareness with three distinguishable phases is nevertheless fundamental to the texts, and the Cloud author

associates specific devotional exercises with each phase. He assumes that his disciple is already well advanced in spiritual perfection, and therefore dwells comparatively little on the spiritual and intellectual purifications which belong to the initial stage of the contemplative ascent. He concentrates more on the activities of prayer and meditation on personal sin and the divine goodness whereby the soul progresses into the illuminative way. His insistence that these exercises cannot be prolonged beyond the intermediate stage is, however, unwavering: thus,

Neuerpeles menes þer ben in þe whiche a contemplatiif prentys schuld be ocupyed, þe whiche ben þeese; Lesson, Meditacion, & Oryson. Or elles to þin vnderstanding þei mowe be clepid: Redyng, þinkyng & Preiing. Of þeese þre þou schalt fynde wretyn in anoþer book of anoþer mans werk moche betyr þen I can telle þee; & þerfore it nedep not here to telle þee of þe qualitees of hem. Bot þis may I telle þee: þeese þre ben so couplid togedir, þat vnto hem þat ben bigynners & profifers - bot not to hem þat be parfit, 3e, as it may be here - þinkyng may not goodly be getyn wipoutyn reding or heryng comyng before... Ne preier may not goodly be getyn in bigynners & profifers wipoutyn þinkyng comyng bifore.
(Cloud 71/11-72/2).

Similarly, he reminds his disciple at the end of Privy Counselling,

þan it is speedful to þee sumtyme for to cees of þees queinte meditacions & þees sotyle ymaginacions of þe qualitees of þi beyng & of Goddes, & of þe werkes of þiself & of God (in þe whiche þi wittes han ben fed & wip þe whiche þou hast ben led from wordlines & bodelines to þat abilnes of grace þat þou arte inne) & for to lerne how þou schalt be ocupied goostly in felyng of þiself & of God, whom þou hast lernid so wel before by þenkyng & ymagenyng of 3oure doynges.
(P.C. 170/15-23).

The transition from the illuminative to the contemplative way, "from wordlines" - the term is particularly apt, since the shift from the finite to the infinite is also a repudiation of the describable in order to experience what cannot be expressed - "& bodelines to þat abilnes of grace þat þou arte inne", is elsewhere defined with the same disregard for schematic precision as a progression from pre-occupation with the humanity of Christ to contemplation of His divinity.

The passage from Privy Counselling continues,

Ensaumple of þis schewid Criste in þis liif. For whi, 3if it so had ben þat þer had ben none hier perfeccion in þis liif bot in beholdyng & in louyng of his manheed, I trowe þat he wolde not þan haue assendid vnto heuen whiles þis woreld had lastid, ne wiþdrawen his bodely presence from his specyall louers in erþe. Bot for þer was an hier perfeccion, þe whiche man may haue in þis liif (þat is to sey, a pure goostli felyng in þe love of his Godheed) þefore he seide to his disciples, þe whiche grocheden to forgo his bodely presence (as þou doost in partie & in maner to forgo þi corious meditacions & þi queinte sotyle wittes) þat it was speedful to hem þat he went bodely fro hem. (P.C. 170/24 - 171/6).

Thus Mary, the type of the contemplative, sat at Christ's feet listening to "þe souereynest wisdom of his Godheed lappid in þe derk wordes of his Manheed" (Cloud 47/11-12), and attention to the physical presence of Christ and his actual words, which give intellectually intelligible form to his spiritual meaning, is explicitly associated with "þe secound party of actyue liif & þe first of contemplatyue liif" (Cloud 47/10-11). Again in the Book of Privy Counselling, the author draws on the traditional exegesis of the Gospels to demonstrate that the humanity of Christ is the sole doorway to his divinity:

Ego sum ostium. Per me si quis introierit, saluabitur; et siue egredietur siue ingredietur, pascua inueniet. Qui vero non intrat per ostium sed assendit aliunde, ipse fur est et latro. (John 10.9). þat is to þin vnderstondyng as 3if he seide þus acordyng to oure mater: 'I þat am almi3ty by my Godheed & may leuefully as porter late in whom I wol, & bi what wey þat I wol, 3it, for I wol þat þer be a comoun pleyne wey & an open entre to alle þat wolen come, so þat none be excusid by vnknowyng of þe wey, I haue clopid me in þe comoun kynde of man, & maad me so opyn þat I am þe dore by my manheed, & whoso entreþ by me, he schal be saaf. (P.C. 159/9-18).¹⁸⁰

The Cloud author thus agrees with both Gallus and Hugh in his demarcation and characterisation of the three principal phases of the contemplative way. He also seems to concur in assigning the roles of divine grace and man's natural faculties in the ascent to union. Unlike

Gallus, who proposes a formal scheme in which the purgative, illuminative and contemplative ways are respectively the domains in which nature, nature and grace, and grace alone operate, the English writer includes relatively little systematic account of this aspect of his contemplative theology. In Privy Counselling, however, which is explicitly the most advanced of his spiritual treatises and rewards the maturity of his disciple with some of the deepest insights into his theory of mystical knowledge, he states,

So þat, in þinges actyue, mans clergie & his kyndely kunnyng schal principaly abounde as in worching, God graciously consentyng, wiþ þees þre witnes (i.e. 'Scripture, counseil & comoun custum of kynde & degre, eelde & compleccyon') aprouid. & skilfully, for alle þinges actyue ben beneþe & vnder þe wisdam of man. Bot in þinges contemplatyue þe heizest wisdom þat may be in man (as man) is fer put vnder, þat God be þe principal in worching, & man bot only consenter & sufferer. (P.C. 163/5-11).

Here again, the distinctions between outward modes of living and inner spiritual states are blurred, and the author takes account of only the two broad categories of active and contemplative in which he had earlier recognized three divisions, but his concept of the unitive way wherein the soul's own efforts are initially assisted and progressively superseded by the operation of divine grace corresponds exactly with the pattern established by Gallus and Hugh. Gallus had also warned of the arduousness of the preliminary stages of the mystic way, but the English author is perhaps closer to Hugh in the vehemence with which he repeatedly insists on this aspect of his spiritual direction. Certainly the Cloud does not devote space equal to the columns which Hugh gives over to describing the various exercises which advance the soul in contemplation in the first chapter of the Viae Syon Lugent. Nor is Hugh's work the only possible source for the devotional practices which the Cloud author recommends, though their agreement in this area is apparent. Both

writers stress the need to acquire true humility, for example, and advocate meditation on personal sin, on divine goodness and on the Passion, in order to bring the soul to a state of grace in which mortal sin is unthinkable.¹⁸¹ The most arresting similarity, however, is the echo of Hugh's terminology in the much-acclaimed vigorous metaphorical language which describes the strenuous process of rejecting worldly concerns in the English text. The Cloud author reaffirms Hugh's contention - which itself recalls Ps.-Dionysius' caution to Timothy in the opening chapter of the De Mystica Theologia -

Quod quia ita derelinquere est difficile, ideo concertatione,
& forti conatu mentis ista resecari iubentur. (681 Col. I B).

Parallels between the English and Latin texts include:

quia tunc in vilipensionem omnia sub suis pedibus cóculcantur.
(671 Col. I E),

Soche a proude, corious witte behouep algates be born doun &
stifly troden doun vnder fote (Cloud 22/19-20),

pou schalt step abouen it (i.e. all consideration of "þe kyndnes
& þe worþines of God in special") stalworþly, bot listely...
(Cloud 26/8-9),

Sekirly þis trauayle is al in tredyng doun of þe mynde of alle
þe creatures þat euer God maad... (Cloud 61/22-23)

pou schalt stalworþly step abouen it (i.e. all thought, memory
of sin etc.) wiþ a feruent steryng of loue, & treed hem doun
vnder þi fete. (Cloud 66/4-5) etc.;¹⁸²

oculú intellectus rescindere oportet, quia in ipsa consurrectione
semper vult illud apprehédere, ad quod tendit affectio. Vnde,
maxima aduersatio in ista consurrectione est vehemens
inhaerentia intellectus cum affectu, quam tamen rescindere necesse
est per magnú exercitium (681 Col. I C),

Ad quam expeditionem cum perfecte poterit attingere, omnis ab
ipsa sapientia in sua consurrectione cogitatio, vel meditatio
abscindetur (668 Col. I B),

cf. similar uses of "rescindere" (680 Col. I B, 670 Col. I B) etc.,
"resecare" (681 Col. I B), and "abscisio" (681 Col. II C-D),

Be blynde in þis tyme, & schere away couetyse of knowyng, for it wil more let þee þan help þee. (Cloud 70/17-18).

The unitive way, by contrast, is commonly denoted by the passive voice in the works of Hugh, Gallus and the Cloud author alike, reflecting the receptive condition in which they hold the soul to be acted upon at this level by divine grace. In general, however, it is arguable that the Cloud author's account of the three phases of the contemplative life is more akin to Hugh's treatment of its divisions than to the more complex classification established by Gallus from which Hugh's version was itself distilled. Gallus subdivides the ascent into nine stages, each defined in detail and associated with the Dionysian theory of the celestial hierarchy. The English writer rarely indulges in the kind of minute analysis of contemplative psychology which characterizes Victorine theology as a whole - though, as his recapitulation of the divisions of the spiritual faculties in Cloud chs. 62-66 illustrates, he readily anchors his theology on the formal definitions which the Victorines assembled as the groundwork of contemplative theory.

The Cloud author, it has already been noted, adopts Gallus' division of the principal cognitive faculties of the soul into the knowing and loving powers, and like him emphasizes the primacy of love in bringing about union above mind, in the sovereign point of the spirit. Hugh of Balma's unitive theology rests upon identical premises - but it remains to be established whether the Cloud author's classification of the contemplative way implies a single continuous process of ascent in which, as for Gallus, the knowing and loving powers are progressively stigmatized and transformed to become the instruments of ecstatic union, or whether, like Hugh, he isolates the mystical faculty and the unitive

way from the procedures which prepare the soul to enter it.

The influence of the Victorine school is perhaps discernible in the English writer's concern to specify the role of the intellect in the contemplative ascent. Whereas Hugh, in his uncompromising insistence on the purely affective character of mystic union, had tended to understate the involvement of the intellect, the Cloud author is perceptibly anxious to concede its proper function and to avoid the charge of dismissing any faculty of man's divinely created being.¹⁸³ In Cloud ch. 8, for example, he identifies the thoughts of personal sin and the Passion which interrupt the inexperienced soul's concentration on God as,

... a scharp & a clere beholding of þi kindly witte, preentid in þi reson wipinne in þi soule. & where þou askist me þerof wheþer it be good or iuel: I sey þat it behouep algates be good in his kynde, for whi it is a beme of þe licnes of God. Bot þe vse þerof may be boþe good & iuel. (Cloud 30/3-8).

Similarly, in the Book of Privy Counselling, he qualifies his denial of the efficacy of meditation in the unitive way by immediately reaffirming the need to apply the intellect in the preliminary stages of the contemplative life. He seems both eager to forestall a potentially disastrous misconception on the part of his disciple, and sensitive to possible misinterpretation of his own standpoint which put him at odds with the devotional piety of the contemporary Church:

Neuerþeles 3it ben þees faire meditaciones þe trewest wey þat a synner may haue in his begynnyng to þe goostly felyng of himself & of God. & me wolde þenk þat it were impossible to mans vnderstandyng - þof al God may do what he wil - þat a synner schuld com to be restful in þe goostly felyng of himself & of God, bot 3if he first sawe & felt by ymaginacion & meditacion þe bodely doynges of hymself & of God, & þerto sorowed for þat þat were to sorowen, & maad joie for þat þat were to joien. & whoso comeþ not in bi þis weye, he comeþ not trewly... (P.C. 158/17-25).

He is nonetheless adamant, however, in restricting the legitimate exercise of the intellect to the novice in contemplation. In the paragraph which immediately precedes the above extract, he challenges his reader,

&, I preie þee, how schuldest þou com to þis worching by þe vse of þi wittys ? Sekirly neuer; ne 3it by þi faire wise, þi sotyle & þi queinte ymaginacions & meditacions, 3e, þof þei be of þi wrechid leuyng, þe Passion of Criste, þe ioies of oure Lady, or of alle þe seintes & aungelles of heuen, or 3it of eny qualite or sotilte or condicion þat perteynþ to þe beyng of þiself or of God. Sekirly me had leuer haue soche a nakid blynde felyng of myself as I touchid before... & raper it schuld breke myn herte in teres for lackyng of felyng of God & for þe painful birpin of myself, & kyndil my desire in loue & desiryng after þe felyng of God, þan alle þe sotyle & þe queynte ymaginacions or meditacions þat man kan telle or may fynde wretyn in book, be þei neuer so holy ne schewe þei neuer so feire to þe sotyle ize of þi corious witte. (P.C. 157/27 - 158/16).

The epithets which the Cloud author here applies to the intellect and the imagination, moreover, betray an instinctive mistrust of them for their seductive power over the contemplative. He recognizes the ambivalence of their capacity for stimulating the soul, and elsewhere refers to the promptings of a "proude, coryous & an ymaginatiif witte" (Cloud 22/18-19) which distract the contemplative from his goal, and cautions the soul far advanced in contemplation to desist from,

besines of þiself in corious seching & ransakyng wip þi goostly wittis amonges eny of þe qualitees þat longin not only to þe beyng of þiself bot also to þe beyng of God. (P.C. 143/13-16).

Like Hugh, who condemns "inutilibus curiositatibus" at all levels, the Cloud author is uncompromisingly opposed to "coryouste of witte" (Cloud 73/12, 98/6), whether it is directed towards the kind of speculative knowledge which is wholly antithetical to the mystic way, or whether its object would have been a proper theme for meditation at a less advanced stage of the ascent. At the highest level,

meditation can only dissipate the contemplative effort; the contrast with its efficacy in recollecting the spiritual and mental faculties in the preliminary stages of the contemplative way is presented in the seventh chapter of Cloud:

For paraenture he wil bryng to þi minde diuerse ful feire & wonderful pointes of his kyndnes, & sey þat he is ful swete & ful louyng, ful gracious & ful mercyful. & 3if þou wilt here him, he coueiteþ no beter; for at þe last he wil þus jangle euer more & more til he bring þee lower to þe mynde of his Passion. & þere wol he lat þe see þe wonderful kyndnes of God; & if þou here him, he kepeþ no beter. For sone after he wil lat þee see þin olde wrechid leuing; & paraenture, in seing & þinkyng þerof, he wil bryng to þi mynde som place þat þou hast wonid in before þis tyme. So þat at þe last, er euer wite þou, þou schalt be scaterid þou wost neuer where. þe cause of þis scateryng is þat þou herddist him first wilfully, answeredist him, resceiuedist him & letest him allone. (Cloud 27/3-14).¹⁸⁴

The English author seems, moreover, to echo Hugh's distinction between the discursive activities of the intellect and its natural tendency to apprehend whatever object the loving power desires - both impulses which must be suppressed in the unitive way.¹⁸⁵ After setting precise limits to the usefulness of the exercise of meditation, the Cloud author thus goes on to warn his disciple of this second and more insidious danger from the intellect at the beginning of chapter 9:

And þerfore þe scharp steryng of þin vnderstondyng, þat wile alweis prees apon þee when þou settest þee to þis blynd werk, behoueþ always be born doun... (Cloud 33/17-19).

Clearly, therefore, the Cloud author insists unflinchingly on the super-intellectual character of mystic union. The unitive experience is held to be purely affective: now the soul, like Mary, attends to the

souereynest wisdom of his Godheed lappid in þe derk wordes of his Manheed: þeder beheeld sche wiþ al þe loue of hir hert. (Cloud 47/11-13).

For both Hugh and the Cloud author, the unitive way is characterized by the soul's concentration of its entire being, its core of pure love, on the corresponding essence of the Being of God Himself. Hugh's description,

nec ibi gratia, nec gloria vel dismissio poenae, vel aliquid aliud requiritur istis desiderijs sursum actiuae consurrectionis, sed ipse solus cui soli propter se in conculcatione vehementiú desideriorú mens vniri aspirat... (681 Col. II C)

is closely paralleled in the Cloud author's least inhibited definitions of the unitive way, which occur in Privy Counselling - the work in which he makes few concessions to the inexperience of his disciple, but shares with him his most profound convictions as with an equal in contemplation:

& loke þat noþing leue in þi worching mynde bot a nakid entent streching into God, not clopid in any specyal þouzt of God in hymself, how he is in himself or in any of his werkes, bot only þat he is as he is. (P.C. 135/19-22)
þat þi þouzt be nakid & þi felyng noþing defoulid, & þou, nakidly as þou arte, wiþ þe touching of grace be priuely fed in þi felyng only wiþ hym as he is; bot blyndly & in partie, as it may be here in þis liif, þat þi longing desire be euermore worching. (P.C.136/26-29)
..for þis nobil nouztynyng of itself in verrey meeknes & þis hyze allyng of God in parfite charite, it deserueþ to haue God (in whose loue it is deeply drenchid in ful & in fynal forsakyng of itself as nouzt or lesse, 3if lesse myzt be) miztely, wisely & goodly sokouryng it & kepyng it & defendyng it fro alle aduersitees, bodyly & goostly, wiþoutyn besynes or trauayle, rewarde or auisement of itself? (P.C. 149/13-19)

Further, the Cloud author seems to endorse Hugh's thesis that the loving faculty alone is engaged in the unitive way, and that this way is isolated from the preparatory phases in which the affection cooperates with the intellect to propel the soul into the way of pure love.¹⁸⁶ The English writer does not imitate Hugh's methodical account of the principles of his unitive theology. Unsystematically, however, and with regard primarily to the practical needs of his disciple, he reaffirms the major grounds on which Hugh distinguishes the unitive way.

His claim that Mary, the type of the contemplative,

... lernid hir to loue a þing þe whiche sche miȝt not se cleerly
in þis liif bi liȝt of vnderstondyng in hir reson, ne ȝit uerely
fele in swetnes of loue in hir affeccion. (Cloud 46/16-18)

restates the proposition which Hugh argues in the Quaestio Unica and which is the basis of his contemplative theory - namely, that the hypothesis that love necessarily succeeds knowledge (a fundamental tenet of Augustinian theology and subsequently propounded by the Victorines) holds good only outside the third way: the order is inevitably reversed when the soul enters the way of union. Equally, the inference that the love which unites the soul to God is distinct from natural affection - and this, presumably, includes the affection which meditation on the divine goodness stimulates during the illuminative phase of the contemplative ascent - seems to concur with Hugh's dissociation of the faculty of unitive love from all antecedent modes of cognition.¹⁸⁷

The English author's placing of meditation in relation to the unitive way also coincides with Hugh's theory. It is the principal exercise which, with rare exceptions, prepares the soul for union: so much is demonstrated by the passage from Privy Counselling 158/17-25 cited above.¹⁸⁸ In the same context, however, the writer also underlines that meditation is not of itself an integral part of the unitive way (*ibid.* 157/27 - 158/16). Similarly, in an analogous passage from the Cloud, the author again isolates the procedures of the unitive way from the exercises which equip the soul to enter it:

... in þis werk men schul use no menes, ne ȝit men mowe not com
þerto wiþ menes. Alle good menes hangen upon it, & it on no mene;
ne no mene may lede þerto. Here bygynnip þe fiue & þritti chapitre.
Neuerþeles menes þer ben in þe whiche a contemplatiif prentys
schuld be occupyed, þe whiche ben þeese; Lesson, Meditacion, &
Oryson... (Cloud 71/7-13).

The segregation of the unitive way here is indisputable: no "means" may initiate union, yet the novice in contemplation is recommended various "means" or exercises to further his progress in the contemplative way. The apparent inconsistency here is only satisfactorily resolved if the unitive way is assumed to be independent of the preparatory stages and to operate according to entirely autonomous laws. It is, the Cloud author repeatedly insists, the way of love alone:

perfore, what tyme þat þou purposest þee to þis werk, & felest bi grace þat þou arte clepid of God, lift þan up þin herte vnto God wip a meek steryng of loue. (Cloud 28/3-5)

Lift up þin herte vnto God wip a meek steryng of loue; & mene himself, & none of his goodes. (Cloud 16/3-4)

In both these extracts, the author seems to be urging his disciple to a new undertaking, a redirection of his will for union into an untried course of love. Interestingly, his use of metaphors to describe this process of loving extension - the most important of Dionysian origin and assembled, as has been noted, by Gallus - seems to be most closely related to their application in the Viae Syon Lugent. Passages such as,

& whoso wile be a parfite dissiple of oure Lordes, him behouip streyne up his spirite in þis werk goostly... (Cloud 61/1-2)
 & loke þat noþing leue in þi worching mynde bot a nakid entent streching into God, not clopid in any specyal þouzt of God in hymself, how he is in himself or in any of his werkes, bot only þat he is as he is. (P.C. 135/19-22)
 lift þan up þin herte vnto God wip a meek steryng of loue...
 for it suffiseþ inou3 a naked entent directe vnto God, wipouten any oper cause þen himself. (Cloud 28/4-9)

seem to recall most vividly Hugh's descriptions of the unitive ascent:

extensio amoris in Deum per amoris desideriu	(658 Col. I C)
més... se extendit in ardore motuum vnionem dilecti desiderans	(676 Col. II D)
amor extensiuus deificans	(681 Col. I B)
directa tendentia suiipsius ad Deum delectatur	(680 Col. I B) -

though there is a convincing precedent for the examples from both Cloud 28/4-9 and Viae Syon Lugent 680 Col. I B in the second chapter of Gallus' commentary on the De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia, where he is discussing the proposition, "dilectio est primus motus secundum mentem":

... id est, inter motus mentales, 'ad divina', id est per quam mens directe in Deum tendit et ad ipsius unionem extenditur. Summus enim apex affectionis secundum Deum unibilis et ad ipsum diligendum habilis, primum motum in Deum directe et quasi perpendiculariter a sua summitate sursum dirigit in desideratum, sed intellectualiter ignotam et inattingibilem pergere nesciunt.¹⁸⁹

Like Hugh, moreover, the Cloud author also emphasizes that the same loving impulse which, through the intervention of divine grace, progressively unites the soul to God in this life is prolonged thereafter into eternity. The unitive way thus culminates in the beatific vision - the whole is a single, independent movement of love. The Cloud author's assertion,

For whi þat parfite steryng of loue þat byginneþ here is euen
in noumbre wiþ þat þat schal last wiþouten ende in þe blis of
heuen; for al is bot one. (Cloud 52/21-23),

parallels Hugh's claim,

... amor ille quo sponsus in vita ista diligitur, idem est
numero cum illo, quo in aeternitate gloriae gubernatori omnium
vnietur (665 Col. I D),

and the corollary in both cases is that the soul is deified through grace, first in its mystic union with God and eternally in the state of beatitude. Hugh's reference to unitive love as "amor extensius deificans" (681 Col. I B), is taken up in the Cloud author's account of the unitive way,

only bi his mercy wiþouten þi desert arte maad a God in grace,
onyd wiþ him in spirit wiþouten departyng, boþe here & in blis

of heuen wipouten any eende. (Cloud 120/16-19)

The Cloud of Unknowing, it has already been suggested, is principally concerned with directing the disciple in the loving extension of his being to God. The author primes his pupil by urging him to refine his love, to focus it narrowly on God and to make it more agile in the impulses which unite it directly to God, by processes which parallel the loving aspirations in which Hugh instructs his audience: the utterance of ejaculatory prayers,¹⁹⁰ for example, and the concentration of the soul's entire unitive purpose in simple single words such as "God", "sin" or "love".¹⁹¹ In this way, the loving impulse is disencumbered of the bodily influences which restrain it and so enflamed with the desire for union that it flies instantaneously to God. The Cloud author's image for this flight - that of a spark shooting up from a fire - is at the heart of his unitive theology:

& þerfore take kepe to þis werk & to þe merueylous maner of it wipinne in þi soule. For 3if it be trewlich conceyued, it is bot a sodeyn steryng, & as it were vnauisid, speedly springing unto God as sparcle fro þe cole. & it is merueylous to noumbre þe sterynges þat may be in one oure wrouzt in a soule þat is disposid to þis werk. & 3it, in o steryng of alle þeese, he may haue sodenly & parfutely forzeten alle create þing. Bot fast after iche steryng, for corrupcion of þe flesche, it falleþ doun azein to som þouzt or to some done or vndone dede. Bot what þerof? For fast after, it riseþ azen as sodenly as it did bifore. (Cloud 22/5-14)

It may perhaps be claimed that the specific reference to a coal fire typifies the author's efforts to bring the abstractions of theology and theological language firmly within the grasp of readers who lacked expertise in Latin religious literature. The image of the spark nevertheless clearly derives from the traditional concept of the scintilla synderesis - formally defined by Thomas Gallus as the soul's unitive faculty which takes flight to God once the soul has transcended

its natural powers and established itself in the ecstatic third way, the domain of synderesis itself. Prof. Hodgson's note on this passage of the Cloud cites less precise uses of the image by Richard of St. Victor and Walter Hilton for comparison:

cf. Benj. Maj. V. 6 (col. 175): 'recte itaque illa mentis in superna elevatio, quae ex fervore dilectionis oritur, fumo, ni fallor, comparatur'; Scale of Perfection, ii. 42, p.371: 'the soul is turned then all into fire of love, and therefore every word it privily prayeth is like to a sparkle springing out of a fire...'; ibid. i, 25, p.44: prayer is 'likened to a fire which of its own kind leaveth the lowness of the earth and always styeth up into the air'.

Wolfgang Riehle assesses the significance of the concept in English contemplative literature in general in his article, "Der Seelengrund in der englischen Mystik des Mittelalters im Vergleich zur deutschen".¹⁹²

He observes that the notion of the scintilla occurs only in generalised form (e.g. Walter Hilton, Of Mixed Life: "vre lord haþ sent in to þin herte a luytel sparkel of his blessed fuire þat is himself").¹⁹³

The term "synteresis", he notes appears in only one English text - The Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost.¹⁹⁴ The word itself, it is true, does not occur in the Cloud Corpus - though its absence is perhaps to be expected, since the Cloud author has been shown to avoid highly technical latinate theological vocabulary where its inclusion might be a source of ambiguity. It is nevertheless apparent that the image of the "spark" - the exact vernacular equivalent of Lat. "scintilla" - is here applied with complete technical accuracy to the impulse which lifts the soul from its natural progress in the unitive way and momentarily fuses it with God. The Cloud author, it has been submitted, follows Hugh of Balma in isolating the unitive way of love from the preparatory phases of purgation and illumination: and it seems, further, that he not only uses the image of the "spark" in a technical sense, but that he

also discriminates between the different interpretations which his sources had put on the notion, and that it is again Hugh rather than Gallus who provides the closest analogue for his particular application of the image. Both authors incorporate it in the scheme of the soul's loving aspirations to God. Comparable passages from the Viae Syon Lugent are

... quando ista vis animae suprema, quae est apex affectus, tagitur ab igne amoris, illo motu & tactu scintillat affectus aspirando in Deu. (686 Col. II E)

and 670 Col. I A-B, where the image is of a sparkling star rather than a fire:

Item mens beata continuo, & indiuisibili exercitio in ipso summo bono veluti aeterno dulcore afficitur, haec tamen modo interscalari, & interciso in ipsum consurgit, cuius motus rectissime est ad instar emissionis sideris scintillantantis, si illae emissiones ex libera voluntate procederent: quia illi motus anagogici sunt quasi subitanei, vt statim post consurrectionem mens infra seipsam inferius prolabatur, iterum & iterum consurgit, & iterum infra seipsam cadit.¹⁹⁵

The soul which has exceeded its power of ordinary love and entered into the apex affectus, where it exercises its unitive love in aspirations to God, fleetingly achieves its purpose through impulses which ascend to God like sparks. The pattern of alternate momentary union and sudden plummeting to the normal human condition is, for both authors, fundamental to the unitive way. Both also measure the soul's movements against an imaginary scale of self, calculating whether the soul is above, equal with, or below itself in its progress to union.¹⁹⁶ It seems, indeed, that while Father Walsh rightly comments that the English author's phrase for the location of the unitive experience, "the sovereign point of the spirit", is an "excellent rendering" of Gallus' expression, the "summus apex affectualis",¹⁹⁷ the significance which he attaches to it

is closer to Hugh's interpretation of the same terminology in passages such as this from 686 Col. II E.¹⁹⁸

It is appropriate, at this juncture, to return to the starting point of this discussion in the Deonise Hid Diuinite which insists, often independently of its immediate sources, that the unitive experience takes place "abouen mynde". The English phrase renders its Latin sources precisely on only two occasions (5/24, 8/13), it will be remembered; in four other instances it is an interpolation (2/25, 2/25-6, 4/3 and 6/28), and in 3/16-17 and (in the variant form "abouen kynde") 4/16 the text of the sources is expanded or modified to accommodate this specific concept of the nature and location of mystic union. It remains to be established, however - in the light of the foregoing discussion which has aimed to set the cryptic theology of the Deonise Hid Diuinite in the wider context of the Cloud Corpus and the author's intermediary sources of Dionysian theology - what kind of experience and what order of knowledge are implied in the descriptive phrase "abouen mynde". This in turn involves broadening the scope of the earlier analysis of the translation, which concentrated primarily on its linguistic aspect, to consider the sense in which the author's terminology, his interpolation of material which does not feature in his immediate sources, and his movement between the various Latin versions of the text, combine to divulge the translator's own interpretation of the matter which he transmits.

Ch. 14 of the Cloud, in which the author impresses on his disciple the need to attain perfect meekness, incorporates a concise definition of four distinct modes of knowledge:

& þerfore swink & swete in al þat þou canst & mayst, for to gete þee a trewe knowyng & a feling of þiself a wreche as þou arte. & þan I trowe þat sone after þat þou schalt haue a trewe knowyng & a felyng of God as he is; not as he is in hymself, for þat may no man do bot himself, ne zit as þou schalt do in blisse boþe body & soule togeders; bot as he is possible, & as he voucheþ saaf to be knowen & felid of a meek soule leuyng in þis deedly body.
 (Cloud 42/1-7)

Three of these - self-knowledge, contemplative knowledge and beatific knowledge - are within the capacity of man; the fourth - God's knowledge of His own Being - is beyond human conception. The text is concerned primarily with the first two categories of knowledge, though the second in some sense includes the third, since the state of beatitude is held to be an extension and fulfilment of the unitive experience. The category of self-knowledge, for the Cloud author's purposes, is also broad enough to embrace knowledge of all that has to do with creation. In ch. 70, he takes account of the necessary distinction between the cognitive processes in which the senses have a part and transmit responses to be interpreted by the intellect, and those which relate to abstractions; but each has affinities with the other in that they pertain to created phenomena, and they are alike antithetical to apprehension of God:

For kyndely þei (i.e. the 'bodely wittes') ben ordeynid þat with hem men schuld haue knowyng of alle outward bodely þinges, & on no wise by hem com to þe knowing of gostely þinges. I mene bi þeire werkes.

By þeire failinges we may, as þus: when we rede or here speke of sum certeyn þinges, & þerto conceyue þat oure outward wittys kon not telle us bi no qualitee what þoo þinges ben, þan we mowe be verely certefied þat þoo þinges ben goostly þinges, & not bodely þinges.

On þis same maner goostly it fariþ in oure goostly wittys, when we trauailen aboute þe knowyng of God himself. For haue a man neuer so moche goostly vnderstondyng in knowyng of alle maad goostly þinges, zit may he neuer bi þe werk of his vnderstondyng com to þe knowyng of an vnmaad goostly þing, þe whiche is nouzt bot God. Bot by þe failyng it may; for whi þat þing þat it failiþ in is noping elles bot only God. & herfore it was þat Seynte Denis seyde: 'þe moste goodly knowyng of God is þat, þe whiche is knowyn bi vnknowyng'.
 (Cloud 124/16-125/12)

The distinction between knowledge according to the first and second categories rests, therefore, upon their object - whether it is not - God or God. The activity of thought belongs exclusively to the first category:

For of alle oper creatures & þeire werkes - 3e, & of þe werkes of God self - may a man þorou grace haue fulheed of knowing, & wel to kon þinke on hem; bot of God himself can no man þinke. & þerfore I wole leue al þat þing þat I can þink, & chese to my loue þat þing þat I cannot þink. For whi he may wel be loued, bot not þouzt. By loue may he be getyn & holden; bot bi þouzt neiþer. (Cloud 25/18 - 26/5)

The Cloud author warns his disciple repeatedly and urgently against involving the intellectual faculty in his desire for union:

& þerfore for Goddes loue beware in þis werk, & trauayle not in þi wittes ne in þin ymaginacion on no wise. For I telle þee trewly, it may not be comen to by trauaile in þeim; & þerfore leue þeim & worche not wip þeim. (Cloud 23/9-12)

The intellectual faculty is linked to creation through the intermediaries of sense and imagination, and therefore cannot comprehend the transcendent being of God. It is only the loving power which has access to a kind of knowledge of God.

Love is thus identified as a cognitive faculty by the Cloud author, and the notion of "comprehension" as a result takes on two contradictory meanings in his work. They are differentiated in the fourth chapter of the Cloud:

For he (i.e. God) is euen mete to oure soule by mesuring of his Godheed; & oure soule euen mete unto him bi worþines of oure creacion to his ymage & to his licnes. & he by himself wipouten moo, & none bot he, is sufficient at þe fulle, & mochel more, to fulfille þe wille, & þe desire of oure soule. & oure soule, bi vertewe of þis reformyng grace, is mad sufficient at þe fulle to comprehende al him by loue, þe whiche is incomprehensible to alle create knowable mizt, as is aungel & mans soule. (I mene by þeire

knowyng & not by þeire louyng, & þerfore I clepe hem in þis
caas knowable miztes). (Cloud 18/13-21)

"Comprehension", as it refers to the soul's unitive awareness of God through love, operates as a metaphor. It describes an experience which is essentially inexpressible since it exceeds man's power to conceive of it, and does so by relating it to the kind of comprehension which is reached through the natural cognitive processes. In so far as it is possible to define the experience, the Cloud author succeeds by identifying the respects in which it both is and is not akin to these processes. He further qualifies it by specifying the conditions under which it obtains. It is dictated, in the first instance, by the fact of divine transcendence, which is absolute and unalterable and precludes knowledge of God's being through man's normal faculties of cognition. God can therefore only be apprehended when these faculties are in abeyance. This is conveyed through the associated imagery of darkness and cloud. Interestingly, the Cloud author seems to subordinate their connexion with the tradition of biblical exegesis, which interprets them as images of the soul's experience once it has cut itself loose from finite objects, to the logical status which they occupy in the Dionysian Corpus. They function as vehicles for metaphysical propositions rather than as evocations of contemplative psychology: their negative connotations express both God's relation to the finite as exceeding its scope and its language, and also the abnegation of natural modes of knowledge which His transcendence implicitly demands of the soul seeking union with Him. The Cloud author is clearly disturbed by the nature of imagery itself, which operates by anchoring the meaning it conveys within the known and finite, but he is pragmatist enough to recognize its efficacy in appealing to his reader's understanding in spiritual matters by way

of his experience of the natural world. As early as the fourth chapter of the text, therefore, he analyses the imagery of darkness and cloud with characteristic concern to forestall any possible misreading of their significance on the part of his pupil, in a passage which compromises between exploiting and rejecting the physical overtones of his terminology:

& wene not, for I clepe it a derknes or a cloude, þat it be any cloude congelid of þe humours þat fleen in þe ayre, ne 3it any derknes soche as is in þin house on niztes, when þi candel is oute. For soche a derknes & soche a cloude maist þou ymagin wiþ coriouste of witte, for to bere before þin izen in þe liztest day of somer; & also a3enswarde in þe derkist nigt of wynter þou mayst ymagin a clere schinyng lizt. Lat be soche falsheed; I mene not þus. For when I sey derknes, I mene a lackyng of knowyng; as alle þat þing þat þou knowest not, or elles þat þou hast forzetyn, it is derk to þee, for þou seest it not wiþ þi goostly i3e. & for þis skile it is not clepid a cloude of þe eire, bot a cloude of vnknowyng, þat is bitwix þee & þi God. (Cloud 23/13-24)

The imagery of darkness and cloud refers not, therefore, to a transitional phase in the contemplative's experience which precedes his initiation into full awareness, but to the persisting state of intellectual and sensual oblivion in which alone the contemplative may experience the transcendent being of God through the cognitive power of love.²⁰⁰

The author insists,

For o þing I telle þee: þat þer was neuer 3it pure creature in þis liif, ne neuer 3it schal be, so hize rauischid in contemplacion & loue of þe Godheed, þat þer ne is euermore a hize & a wonderful cloude of vnknowyng bitwix him & his God. In þis cloude it was þat Marye was ocupied wiþ many a preue loue put. (Cloud 47/17-21)

The disciple is urged to "wone & worche" ceaselessly in the cloud of unknowing,²⁰¹ and repeatedly cautioned against anticipating release from the darkness and cloud, since it is only in a condition of ignorance according to natural modes of knowing that true knowledge

of God is to be found:

Lette not þerfore, bot trauayle þerin tyl þou fele lyst. For at þe first tyme when þou dost it, þou fyndest bot a derknes, & as it were a cloude of vnknowyng, þou wost neuer what, sauyng þat þou felist in þi wille a nakid entent vnto God. þis derknes & þis cloude is, howsoeuer þou dost, bitwix þee & þi God, & letteþ þee þat þou maist not see him cleerly by lizt of vnderstanding in þi reson, ne fele him in swetnes of loue in þin affeccion. & þerfore schap þee to bide in þis derknes as longe as þou maist, euermore criing after him þat þou louest; for 3if euer schalt þou fele him or see him, as it may be here, it behouep alweis be in þis cloude & in þis derknes. (Cloud 16/19-17/9)²⁰²

In figurative terms equal to the imagery of darkness and cloud, the disciple's impulse to unitive awareness is to be "nakid" or "blynde". Each word functions as a negative of deprivation, denoting the abandonment of self and knowledge by way of the senses and intellect which is a condition of affective knowledge of God. The perfected impulse of unitive love is described in the Book of Privy Counselling:

& in þis tyme is þi loue boþe chaste & parfite. In þis tyme it is þat þou boþe seest þi God & þi loue, & nakidly felist hym also bi goostly onyng to his loue in þe souereyn poynte of þi spirit, as he is in hymself, bot blyndely, as it may be here, vtterly spoylid of þiself & nakidly cloþed in hymself as he is, vncloþed & not lappid in any of þees sensible felynges (be þei neuer so sweet ne so holy) þat mowen falle in þis liif. Bot in purete of spirit propirly & parfitely he is parceyuid & felt in himself as he his, fer lengid fro any fantasye or fals opinion þat may falle in þis liif. (P.C. 169/17-26)²⁰³

The Cloud author's application of the imagery of blindness, in fact, has close parallels in the Viae Syon Lugent. Hugh insists here that the eye of the intellect should be blind - "intellectiuus oculus totaliter excaecatur" (681 Col. I D) - for the soul to undertake the unitive way of love.²⁰⁴ It is interesting, moreover, that the English author introduces the concept of "blynde beholdynges" into his translation of the De Mystica Theologia, deviating strikingly from his Latin sources which read "mysticas visiones" (S) or "mysticarum

contemplationum" (Ex.) at this point.²⁰⁵ By substituting his own phrase for the text of his sources, the Cloud author is clearly superimposing his personal interpretation of unitive theology on the text of the De Mystica Theologia and integrating Dionysian principles in the purest form in which they reached him with the tempered Dionysianism which he had received primarily through Thomas Gallus and Hugh of Balma, and which he expounded in his own original compositions.

A further condition of the soul's attainment of unitive wisdom, according to the Cloud author, is the intercession of divine grace. It operates on two levels. In the first instance, it is through grace that God adapts his transcendent being to the cognitive power of the soul's faculty of love, and secondly, it is only by God's gracious permission that the soul has the capacity to apprehend Him through love. Both ideas are accommodated in the passage from Cloud Ch. 4 (18/13-21) quoted in full above, whose measured cadence confirms the sense of the mutual compatibility of the soul and God:

For he is euen mete to oure soule by mesuring of his Godheed;
& oure soule euen mete unto him bi worpines of oure creacion to
his ymage & to his licnes...²⁰⁶

Many parallel passages from the Cloud Corpus support the insistence here on the centrality of grace: it is the cornerstone for the soul's ascent to the sovereign point of the spirit, where the soul knows God through loving union with Him. Thus, in the "hizer partie of contemplatiue liif", the author maintains,

... a man is abouen himself & vnder his God. Abouen himself he is, for whi he purposeþ him to wyne þeder bi grace, wheþer he may not com bi kynde; þat is to sey, to be knit to God in spirite, & in oneheed of loue & acordaunce of wile. (Cloud 32/12-16)

Interpolations in the text of the Latin sources of the Deonise Hid
Diuinite, moreover, reaffirm the author's adherence to this point of
doctrine where it effectively qualifies the Dionysian theory of knowledge
through unknowing. The Dionysian concept of the negative way is
materially altered by the introduction of the conditional phrase "in
pis grace" in, for example, 3/10-12 -

loke þat þou rise wiþ me in pis grace, in a maner þat is þou
woste neuer how, to be onid with hym þat is abouen alle substaunces
and al maner knowyng -

and the inclusion of "by þe steryng of grace" in the invitation to
Timothy to embark on the unitive way which opens the text (2/31-2)
makes the entire exercise which it advocates dependent on the inter-
vention of grace. The translator may, however, have been influenced
by Gallus in this last example: the Extractio here incorporates the
clause "sic cooperare radio divino" (567), and the Gloss reads "sic
cooperante divino radio" (272A). It seems certain, indeed, that
whether or not the English author was directly indebted to Gallus in
this particular instance, he owes the emphasis which he gives here and
in his work as a whole to the role of grace in the contemplative way
first and foremost to Gallus' interpretation of Dionysian theology.
The influence of Gallus is equally apparent in Hugh of Balma's
emphasis on the need for grace in the contemplative way.²⁰⁷

The English translator's insistence on the distinctions between
intellectual knowledge and the unitive knowledge which the contemplative
achieves through the fulfilment of these conditions, is expressed
through the interpolation of explanatory glosses on the De Mystica
Theologia which also argue the impact of the interpretations of Gallus
and Balma on his approach to Dionysian theology. Three interpolations

to the Latin text of Sarracenus specifically identify unitive awareness according to Ps.-Dionysius as knowledge-in-love: Moses' entry into the darkness of Sinai is thus defined as an act of love ("... Moyses in syngulertee of affeccioun was departid from þees beforeseyde chosen preestes, & entrid by hymself þe derknes of vnknowyng" (D.H.D. 5/15-17));²⁰⁸ God is said to reveal Himself only to those who imitate Moses and "entren wiþ affeccioun into derknes, where verely he is" (D.H.D. 4/25); and the opening prayer for the work of the text to be accomplished in the writer stipulates that this is to be achieved through unitive love ("þerfore wiþ affeccyon abouen mynde as I may, I desire to purchase hem vnto me wiþ þis preier" (D.H.D. 2/25-7)).²⁰⁹ Similarly, the translator overlays Ps.-Dionysius' account of the transcendence of God with his own version, which restricts God's impenetrability more precisely to intellectual cognition by his creatures: the description of Moses' attainment of "þe hizenes of þe godliche assenciouns", the culmination of knowledge according to the affirmative method, is thus suffixed by the explanatory clause, "þe whiche is þe teermes & þe boundes of mans vnderstondyng, be it neuer so holpen wiþ grace" (D.H.D. 5/1-3), and in an interpolation which recalls the assertion in Cloud 18/19-20 that God is impenetrable to all intelligent beings by way of their intellect ("... incomprehensible to alle create knowable miȝt, as is aungel & mans soule"), he again defines these "assenciouns" as the "teermes set vnto man or aungel" in D.H.D. 4/22-23. Both Cloud 18/19-20 and D.H.D. 4/22-23 seem, in fact, to echo Gallus' claim, already cited, in the Commentary on Isaias.²¹⁰

The character of unitive knowledge according to the Cloud author's theology, it has been suggested, is defined partly in negative terms by denying it the properties of natural modes of cognition. The concept

of "vnknowyng" operates in this way, to suggest that the experience involves holding the normal functions of the working mind in abeyance.²¹¹

The disciple is advised,

& loke þat noþing leue in þi worching mynde bot a nakid entent
streching into God, not clopid in any specyal þouzt of God in
hymself, how he is in himself or in any of his workes, bot only
þat he is as he is. (P.C. 135/19-22)

Unitive knowledge does not depend on the rational faculty and is non-discursive. The author later reminds his pupil of Richard of St. Victor's exegesis of the biblical account of the death of Rachel at the birth of her son Benjamin, which he interprets as the death of reason with the advent of contemplation (P.C. 150/10-28), and he goes on to compare the contemplative state to the physical condition of sleep - both are marked by the stilling of the sensual and intellectual functions of the body (P.C. 152/3-9). There is an interesting counterpart for the notion of "vnknowyng" - which infers a kind of knowledge which has none of the characteristics of ordinary knowledge - in the Cloud author's suggestion that the contemplative develops a habit of thought which is divorced from the deductive processes which naturally belong to the activity of thinking:

Loke up þan liztly & sey to þi Lorde, ouper wiþ mouþ or mening
of hert: 'þat at I am, Lorde, I offre vnto þee, for þou it arte'.
& þenk nakidly, pleyedly & boistously þat þou arte as þou arte,
wiþoutyn any maner of coriouste. (P.C. 136/30-137/3)

The soul is seen to unite with God in a disembodied consciousness of its own essence in relation to the essence of God Himself.²¹² In this state, it is infused with an experiential knowledge of His being, which the Cloud author consistently identifies as wisdom and dissociates from knowledge according to the natural faculties of cognition. Interpreting Proverbs 3. 9-10, he therefore writes,

... þin inward goostly wittis, þe whiche þou arte wonte for to streine & presse togeders bi diuerse corious meditacions & resonable inuestigacions abouten þe goostly knowing of God & þiself in beholding of his qualitees & of þine, scholen þan rebounde ful of wyne. By þe whiche wine in Holy Scripture is verrely & mistely vnderstonden goostly wisdom in verrey contemplacion & heiz sauour of þe Godheed. (P.C. 144/20-26)

Commenting also on Proverbs 3.13-14, he says,

þe frute of þis worching is hize goostly wisdom, sodenly & frely riftid of þe spirit inly in itself & vnformid, ful fer fro fantasie, impossible to be streinid or to falle vnder þe worching of naturele witte. (P.C. 145/27-30)²¹³

Admission to divine wisdom is also one of the gifts which distinguish the contemplative:

a soule ... so frely fastnyd & foundid in þe feip, so fully mekid in nouztnyng of itself & so louely led & fed in þe loue of oure Lorde, wiþ ful knowing & felyng of his almiztyheed, his vnwetyn wisdom & his glorious goodnes. (P.C. 149/6-10)

This concept of wisdom as the culmination of the unitive way is clearly derived from Dionysian theology as it was interpreted by Thomas Gallus. The prominence which Gallus gives to sapientia is echoed, even exaggerated, by Hugh of Balma in the Viae Syon Lugent. The third chapter of this work deals at length with the notion, maintaining that wisdom is the source of discretion in all that pertains to the spiritual life, and that its possessor has the key to the mysteries into which he is initiated by the De Mystica Theologia. The precise origin of the Cloud author's concept of unitive wisdom - if indeed it is to be found in either of the two writers exclusively - is difficult to ascertain, since there is so much apparent coincidence in the theories of Balma and Gallus. In interpretation, however, the Cloud author's unitive theology has been seen to resemble most closely that of Balma,

and a further circumstance sanctions the concentration on Balma for detailed comparison with the English author here: it is, that it is a section of the important third chapter of the Viae Syon Lugent which is included in MS Douce 262 with the Cloud and Privy Counselling. Perhaps, therefore, the sixteenth century Carthusian compiler of this manuscript himself saw grounds for linking Hugh's theology with that of the Cloud author in this particular respect.

For both Hugh and the Cloud author, privilege of whatever kind - intellectual, social, or religious - has no bearing on the attainment of contemplative knowledge. Hugh's insistence that unitive wisdom is in the gift of God alone, to be bestowed wherever He wills -

... vt omnes sapientes mundi confutet, cum simplex vetula, vel rusticus pascualis ad istius sapientiae consurrectionem perfecte possit attingere, dum tamen modo praedicto se praeparet, quod nulla praehabita scientia, vel mortali industria apprehendit
(681 Col. II A) -

is matched by the Cloud author's disclaimer against those of intellectual pretensions who complain of the excessive difficulties of his theology:

þis is litil maistrie for to þink, zif it were bodyn to þe lewdist man or womman þat leuip in þe comounist wit of kynde in þis liif, as me þenkip. & þerfore softely, mornyngly & smylyngly I merueyle me somtyme whan I here sum men sey (I mene not simple lewid men & wommen, bot clerkes (& men) of grete kunnyng) þat my writyng to þee & to oper is so harde & so heiz, & so curious & so queinte, þat vnneþes it may be conceiuid of þe sotelist clerk or wittid man or womman in þis liif, as þei seyn. Bot to þees men most I answeere & sey þat it is moche worþi to be sorowid, & of God & his louers to be mercyfuly scornid & bitterly reþrouid, þat now þees dayes not only a fewe folkes, bot generally nizhond alle (bot zif it be one or two in a contrey of þe specyall chosen of God) ben so bleendid in here coryous kunnyng of clergie & of kynde þat þe trewe conceite of þis lizt werk, þorow þe whiche þe boistousest mans soule or wommans in þis liif is verely in louely meeknes onyd to God in parfite charite, may no more, ne zit so moche, be conceyuid of hem in soþfastnes of spirit, for her blyndnes & here coriouste, þen may þe kunnyng of þe grettest clerk in scole of a zong child at his A.B.C.
(P.C. 137/4-22) 213a.

Hugh's contention that wisdom is received solely and directly from God,²¹⁴ and that the soul's capacity for knowledge of Him is both divinely created and augmented as God imparts Himself more fully in response to the soul's growing love of Him, is also reproduced by the Cloud author:

in quantum plus affectus de theoricis eloquiis, scilicet diuinis
influitionibus, quibus mens cum dilecto garrula iucú datur, recipit,
in tantú Deus solus in mente intimius se immittit, vt ipse qui est
vera sapientia, per diuiniore radios praeclarius cognoscatur
(681 Col. II E)

Were þou verrely meek þou schuldest fele of þis werk as I sey: þat
God zeuip it frely wiþouten any desert. þe condicion of þis werk
is soche, þat þe presence þerof abliþ a soule for to haue it & for
to fele it. & þat abilnes may no soule haue wiþoutyn it. þe abilnes
to þis werk is onyd to þe selue werk, wiþoutyn departyng; so þat
whoso felip þis werk is abil þerto, & elles none; (Cloud 69/22-70/4)

The Cloud author writes with more general reference to the unitive experience, however, and the form of the passage is in this instance much more strongly reminiscent of Gallus' discourse on the same theme in the fourth chapter of his explanation of the De Diuinis Nominibus.²¹⁵

The infusion of divine wisdom at last takes place when the soul has abandoned knowledge according to the senses and intellect and entered through love into the highest point of the soul, which is its faculty for mystic union. The Cloud author's promise to his disciple,

... zif þou wilt holde þee besily, as þou maist by grace, euermore
contynowly in þe first poynte of þi spirit, offrings up vnto God
þat nakid blynde felyng of þin owne beyng, þe whiche I clepe þe
first of þi frutes, sekir be þou þat þe toþer hynder ende of
Salamons lesson schal be ful verrely fulfillid as he hoteþ,
wiþouten besines of þiself in corious seching & ransakyng wiþ
þi goostly wittis amonges eny of þe qualitees þat longin not
only to þe beyng of þiself bot also to þe beyng of God
(P.C. 143/8-16),

recalls Hugh's proposition,

Vnde tota ista sapientia in hoc solo perficitur, vt ipsa affectiua in suo supremo apice constituta, per abscisionem totius intellectualis operationis nihil aliud, quam soli Deo vniri desiderat. (681 Col. II C-D)

Consurrectio ergo per vnitiui amoris affectiones flammigeras, supra omne officium intellectus in supremo affectiuae apice constituta, ipsa est sapientia intenta ad praesens quae idem est quod Mystica Theologia... (669 Col. I C)

It has also been demonstrated that unitive knowledge, for both authors, is distinct from and superior to discursive knowledge, though the remarkable degree of coincidence in their views is worth reaffirming by comparison of similar passages on this subject from the Viae Syon Lugent and the Cloud Corpus. Hugh of Balma's assertion that meditation, even if its theme is the highest mystery of the Trinity, is still inferior to the contemplative wisdom which Mary cultivated -

Ista ergo speculatio inter speculatiuas contemplationes excellentissima relinqui iubetur: non quia bona non sit & nobilis, sed quia est alia superior apprehensio in mente humana, per quam solam excellentissime supremus spirituum attingatur, quae sola optima portio Mariae dicitur (681 Col. I A) -

is closely paralleled in the Cloud author's recommendation of contemplation, here too identified as the best part chosen by Mary, above all forms of meditation:

Wepe þou neuer so moche for sorow of þi sinnes or of þe Passion of Criste, or haue þou neuer so moche mynde of þe ioies of heuen, what may it do to þee? Sekirly moche good, moche helpe, moche profite, & moche grace wol it gete þee; bot in comparison of þis blinde steryng of loue, it is bot a litil þat it dop, or may do, wipouten þis. þis bi itself is þe best partye of Mary, wipouten þees oper. (Cloud 39/4-10).

The similarity is still more striking between Hugh's affirmation that contemplative knowledge is the only true knowledge in, for example, 679 Col. II C-D -

Mysticas enim visiones appellat ipse Dionysius in tota philosophia

sua, quae transcendit omnis entis considerationes, quando intellectiua cognoscit ex ipso affectu precedente, nec è contra, & ista est verissima, et certitudinalis cognitio ab omni errore, & opinione, & phantastica deceptione penitus elongata²¹⁶ -

and the Cloud author's equally strongly worded preference in the following passages:

& here mowe men schortly conceyue þe maner of þis worching, & cleerly knowe þat it is fer fro any fantasie, or any fals ymaginacion, or queynte opinion; þe whiche ben brouzt in, not by soche a deuoute & a meek blynde stering of loue, bot by a proude, coryous & an ymaginatiif witte. (Cloud 22/15-19)
For whi loue may reche to God in þis liif, bot not knowing. & al þe whiles þat þe soule woniþ in þis deedly body, euermore is þe scharpnes of oure vnderstanding in beholding of alle goostly þinges, bot most specialy of God, medelid wip sum maner of fantasie; for þe whiche oure werk schuld be vnclene, & bot if more wonder were, it schuld lede us into moche errour.
(Cloud 33/11-16)²¹⁷

The English text here reproduces not only the sense but also the vocabulary of the Viae Syon Lugent, and the echo of Balma's use of the image of distance in the phrase "ab omni... phantastica deceptione penitus elongata" in the Cloud author's "fer fro any fantasie" is particularly marked.

There is nevertheless no inconsistency in the allowance which both Hugh and the Cloud author make for enlightenment of the intellect once the unitive state has been achieved - an enlightenment which is consequent upon the higher apprehension of God which is wisdom, but not, as in the case of Gallus, integral to it. Hugh writes of the effect of divine wisdom,

... specialiter intellectum mortificat, & soli diuinae
influentiae se submittit (682 Col. I A)
Quae non tantum affectum supra se erigit, & amore ecstático
perfecte vnit sponso altissimo creaturam, sed insuper intantum
eleuat intellectum, vt multo plus omni prudentia, et cognitione
diuinis fulgoribus illustretur, quam aliquo ingenij exercitio
valeat obtineri. (679 Col. II A-B)

The same assumption apparently underlies the Cloud author's assertion in the Pistle of Preier that the unitive experience - though itself essentially affective rather than noetic - still induces a degree of intellectual illumination which exceeds any knowledge accessible to the soul in its natural condition:

for 3if I schal more heilich spekin in declaring of my mening of þe perfeccioun & of þe mede of þis reuerent affeccioun, I say þat a soule, touched in affeccioun bi þe sensible presence of God as he is in hymself & in a parfite soule, & illumind in þe reson by þe clere beme of euerlastyng lizt, þe whiche is God, for to se and for to fele þe louelines of God in himself, haþ for þat tyme and for þat moment lost alle þe mynde of any good deed or of any kindnes þat euer God did to him in þis liif; so þat cause for to loue God fore feleþ he or seeþ he none in þat tyme oþer þan his God. (P.P. 54/3-12)

The passage is intensely affirmative in its identification of God as light. The author reuses the traditional metaphor of light, and confers on it an absolute value, which gives it almost nominal force, as an approximate statement of the nature of God Himself, independently of His relationship to creation.²¹⁸ In this, it corresponds precisely to the concept of divine darkness, which implies that only denying God the attribute of light as man comprehends and expresses it can fully convey the sense in which God is truly light. It is excess of light, the Cloud author maintains, which blinds the soul when it first enters the unitive way:

Lat be þis eueriwhere & þis ou3t, in comparison of þis (nozwhere & þis) nou3t. Reche þee neuer 3if þi wittys kon no skyle of þis nou3t; for whi I loue it moche þe betir. It is so worþi a þing in itself þat þei kon no skyle þerapon. þis nou3t may betir be felt þen seen; for it is ful blynde & ful derk to hem þat han bot lityl while lokid þerapon. Neuerþeles, 3if I schal soþlier sey, a soule is more bleendid in felyng of it for habundaunce of goostly lizt, þen for any derknes or wantyng of bodely liztte. (Cloud 122/6-13)

Clearly, the metaphor of divine darkness has the same logical function

for both the Cloud author and Ps.-Dionysius, as denoting, paradoxically, excess of light - the "souereyn-schinyng derknes" (D.H.D. 2/20), "supersplendentem...caliginem" (S.566), of the invocation to Wisdom which introduces the De Mystica Theologia. For the English author, the corollary of the concept of God as light is that a real infusion of intellectual knowledge takes place once the soul has achieved the unitive state, though the natural activities of the senses and intellect have had no part in bringing it to this condition.²¹⁹ Ps.-Dionysius' application of the metaphor of light in the De Mystica Theologia also admits this construction. In both the cited passages from Cloud and the Pistle of Preier, however, the actuality and immediacy of the contemplative's knowledge of God stands in relief against its background of negation. The author describes it in experiential terms, and the sense of touch seems to provide his closest analogy for the soul's direct encounter with God. The soul knows God through feeling his presence - it is as if the Cloud author seeks to convey the unimaginable extent of such knowledge and its transcendence of natural cognitive experiences by suggesting that knowledge-in-love has both the intensity and immediacy of sensory knowledge, and the insight of intellectual cognition. There is nothing of this in the Dionysian Corpus.

The metaphor of feeling is used in a technical sense to describe the unitive experience throughout the Cloud Corpus. In ch. 4 of the Cloud, for example, the author advises his pupil,

Bot seker be þou þat cleer siȝt schal neuer man haue here in
 þis liif; bot þe felyng mowe men haue þorow grace whan God
 voucheþ saaf. (Cloud 34/17-19)

He warns that concentration on anything less than God,

... makip þee in as moche more vnable to fele in experience
þe frute of his loue. (Cloud 35/1-2)

Comparison with other extracts cited in the discussion of unitive wisdom (P.C. 143/8-16, 145/27-30, 149/6-10, Cloud 69/22-70/7, for example) suggests, indeed, that the author's concept of the experience was allied to particular biblical texts and to the imagery of sense and fruition which they employ. The extent to which these ideas seem to have become integral to his thought is illustrated by his substitution of his own definition of contemplative union in the Deonise Hid Diuinite 5/19-20 -

he is maad in a maner þat is inuisible & vngropable for to fele
in experience þe presence of hym þat is abouen alle þinges -

which accentuates its experiential character, for the more metaphysical descriptions which appear in his sources:

et in non-palpabili omnino et invisibili fit, omnis existens
ejus qui est super omnia, (S. 577)
Et per eam omnis unitus Deo (qui est super omnia) constituitur
in excellentia quam neque ratio investigat neque intellectus
speculatur. (Ex. 577)

The Cloud author's profoundly experiential account of contemplative union also has close affinities with that of Balma, and there are parallels in their application of sense imagery. Hugh's definition evolves from his theory - largely derived from Gallus - that the way to wisdom is via the affection, whereas the intellect is conducive to discursive knowledge alone:

Item Psalmista: Gustate & videte, &c. Cum igitur gustare affectum respiciat amoris, videre autem intellectus cogitationem, vel

meditationem: ergo primo oportet motu amoris consurgere, quam occultissimum Deum intellectualiter cogitando cognoscere. Nam haec est regula generalis in mystica Theologia, quod primo oportet habere practicam, quam theoreticam, id est, vsum exercitij in corde, quam ipsius rei, vel eorum quae dicuntur habere notitiam.

(684 Col. I D-E)²²⁰

Like Hugh, the Cloud author distinguishes intellectual from affective cognition, and, in the following examples, similarly associates the former with the sense of sight, while reserving the senses of taste and touch, which involve a more intimate relation between subject and object, as metaphors for the direct encounter between the soul and God which takes place in the experience of union. Thus Mary, he claims,

lernid hir to loue a þing þe whiche sche mizt not se cleerly in þis liif bi lizt of vnderstondyng in hir reson, ne zit uerely fele in swetnes of loue in hir affeccion. (Cloud 46/16-18)

The disciple is likewise warned to expect a total disorientation on first entering into the darkness of unknowing, when

... þou maist not see him (i.e. God) cleerly by lizt of vnderstonding in þi reson, ne fele him in swetnes of loue in þin affeccion (Cloud 17/4-5),

until he learns to feel and see as the unitive way demands. The promise of a foretaste of eternal beatitude in the contemplative experience draws on the same imagery:

And þerfore whoso were refourmyd by grace þus to continow in keping of þe sterynges of þe wille, schuld neuer be in þis liif - as he may not be wipouten þees sterynges in kynde - wipouten som taast of þe eendles swetnes; & in þe blisse of heuen withouten þe fulle food. (Cloud 19/14-18)

The cognitive nature of the unitive experience is also expressed, however, through a different application of the imagery of sight. In Cloud ch. 26, for example, the author encourages his disciple with the prospect that God might intervene in his striving for union to permit him a brief anticipatory glimpse of his ultimate goal:

þan wil he sumtyme paraenture seend oute a beme of goostly lizt,
peersyng þis cloude of vnknowing þat is bitwix þee & hym, & schewe
þee sum of his priuete, þe whiche man may not, ne kan not, speke. þan
schalt þou fele þine affeccion enflaumid wip þe fiire of his loue, fer
more þen I kan telle þee, or may, or wile, at þis tyme. (Cloud 62/14-19)²²²

Here the Cloud author again associates the infusion of unitive knowledge with the sensuous recognition of presence through touch, but he also introduces the analogy of sight for the soul's initiation into the mysteries of God.²²² Thus, in Privy Counselling, he envisages the state of the soul in contemplation of God:

þe sely soule may softely sleep & rest in þe louely beholdyng of
God as he is, in ful fedyng & strengping of þe goostly kynde ...
(P.C. 152/7-9)

The qualification that such beholding is "blinde", as, for example, in Cloud 32/7, reinforces the distinction between vision of this order and natural sight - just as the allied paradoxical concept of knowledge through unknowing dissociates mystical awareness from its natural counterpart. But in both cases the positive element is dominant and affirms the cognitive character of the unitive experience.²²³ This experience anticipates the "cleer sizt" (Cloud 34/17) which the contemplative enjoys once he has passed to the state of beatitude which is the fulfilment of his vision through mystical union on earth.

V. Deonise Hid Diuinite: the translator's use of his Latin sources, and the text as an expression of his contemplative theology.

The range of this chapter has clearly been considerable, in order to accommodate the diverse factors which had some bearing on the transposition of Dionysian negative theology and its associated terminology from Greek, through Latin, into English. Its "portmanteau" quality has endeavoured to reflect the circumstances which determined the eventual character of the Deonise Hid Diuinite: the progressive christianisation of the Greek treatise which accompanied its translation into Latin and the efforts of successive commentators to make it

available and comprehensible to a wider audience; the problems of introducing the extraordinary complexities of Dionysian theology to a circle of English readers who seem to have been insufficiently at ease with Latin, the principal language of theology, to have benefitted from existing Latin versions of the De Mystica Theologia and the extensive critical apparatus and explanatory literature which it had inspired: the allied difficulty of depending on a vernacular which was previously untried as a vehicle for the demanding vocabulary of Dionysian theology; the translator's imposition of his own interpretation of Dionysian principles, shaped by his intelligent reading of secondary literature in the Dionysian tradition, on the substance of the text. The resulting translation seems in some way to vindicate both the contradictory assessments offered by Dom Justin McCann and Prof. Hodgson. McCann's comment that,

The author's Hid Divinity is a free version of the Mystical Theology of Denis..., 224

gives a just sense of the translator's manipulation of his resources - textual and linguistic - to produce a text which gives full expression to his personal understanding of Dionysian theology. On the other hand, Prof. Hodgson's testimony to the translator's fidelity to the sources which he named -

With few exceptions the Middle English translator follows phrase by phrase this sequence of thought. But he tells us that he 'moche folowed þe sentence' of Vercellensis as well as 'þe nakid lettre' of the Latin text... .

There are comparatively few passages where the Middle English translation has added to the Latin versions of Sarracenus or Vercellensis, or differs from them. Apart from the one long addition in chapter 2, it follows them carefully, and though it may expand to simplify, it omits no link in thought²²⁵ -

aptly credits him with the translator's proper virtues of accuracy

and lucidity.²²⁶

The English author's observance of the translator's function is, indeed, apparent in his selection of material from his sources. It is worth stressing that the Deonise Hid Diuinite is closely modelled on the version of Sarracenus - that is, on the nearest to a definitive Latin text of Ps.-Dionysius which was available to the translator - and that he introduced modifications drawn from secondary explanatory sources only where he is impelled to do so for reasons of a doctrinal discrepancy or in the interests of a more immediately comprehensible text. Comparison with Gallus' Extractio, for example, brings to light many instances of the translator's reluctance to expand his text with further interpretative material from Gallus with which he would undoubtedly have been in sympathy - presumably in order to preserve the character of a translation and to avoid overburdening the text with comment where its meaning is already sufficiently clear. Thus, the opening prayer of the Deonise Hid Diuinite incorporates neither Gallus' definition of unitive wisdom ("... sapientiae Christianorum, quae est optima portio Mariae, cui ancillatur sapientia gentilium philosophorum" (Ex. 565)), nor his account of divine darkness ("... caliginem (id est inaccessibilem lucem Verbi quod Pater inaudibiliter loquitur)(Ex. 566)); "Quod lumen dicitur a beato Dionysio supersplendens occulte dicti silentii caligo. Haec est incomprehensibilitas, quae dicitur caligo propter luminis excessionem" (Gloss 271 B)); similarly, in D.H.D. 4/25 and 5/17, the translator omits Gallus' qualifications of the concepts of "derknes" and "derknes of vnknowyng" - the corresponding passages in the Extractio read "... caliginem, id est, uniuntur incomprehensibilitati divinae" (574) and "caliginem ignorantiae, id

est, unitur incomprehensibilitati divinae quam non penetrat intelligentia" (577) - and his reiteration, in the last example, that unitive knowledge "effectiva est verae cognitionis" (578) is also missing from the English text. Where there seems to be no overriding reason - doctrinal, linguistic, or to elucidate meaning - against reproducing the text of Ps.-Dionysius as faithfully as possible, the translator consistently retains the readings of Sarracenus in preference to Gallus' emendations: thus in D.H.D. 3/11-12, "to be onid with hym pat is abouen alle substaunces and al maner knowyng", corresponds closely to Sarracenus' version, "ad ejus unitionem qui est super omnem substantiam et cognitionem" (568), even though Gallus' reading, "ad unitionem Dei quae est super omnem substantiam et cognitionem" (568), which shifts the emphasis from God's transcendence to the mystical character of the unitive experience by making the qualifying clause dependent on "union" rather than "God", has more in common with the general bias of the Cloud author's work.

Equally, the English translator's adaptations of the Latin text are not always modelled on Gallus' Extractio or Gloss. Sometimes the hint comes from Gallus, but the translator draws upon his wider reading - often of Gallus himself - in compiling his own version. Ch. I of the Deonise Hid Diuinite, for example, reads

bot verely and cleerly he apperip open, not to alle bot to hem only, þe whiche passen abouen hope alle vnclene & clene beyng þinges, and þe whiche comyn abouen alle assenciouns of alle holy eendes or teermes set vnto man or to aungel (4/20-23),

where Sarracenus has,

et solis non-velate et vere apparet his qui et immunda et munda transeunt et omnem omnium sanctarum extremitatum ascensum

superveniunt... (573),

and the Extractio expands to,

et illis solis revelate et vere apparet qui per mentis excessum non solum transcendunt sensibilia et imaginabilia sed pure quoque intelligibilia, et superant omnem ascensum summorum spectaculorum intelligibilium. (573)

The English version attaches itself closely to the text of Sarracenus - the interpolation "and cleerly" reinforces rather than modifies its meaning, and the phrase "not to alle bot to hem only" seems calculated to interpret Sarracenus' reading "solis non-velate" which Gallus emends to "solis revelate". The translator does not reproduce Gallus' interpretative account of the conditions under which the unitive experience takes place. He does, however, take up Gallus' suggestion that contemplative vision transcends the level of the intelligible, and elaborates on the text of Sarracenus to emphasize that such vision exceeds the natural powers of all intelligent beings - "abouen alle ... teermes set vnto man or to aungel". It has already been mooted that the Cloud author came to this theory through Gallus, and its particular wording here, which recalls Cloud 18/17-21, suggests that the Extractio itself was in this case the stimulus rather than the source for the interpolation, while the translator's thorough familiarity with Gallus' interpretations of Dionysian theology as a whole was responsible for its form.²²⁷

The influence of Gallus on the Cloud author was clearly pervasive, and it is possible that it may also have extended to his prose style. Margery M. Morgan's articles on prose tradition in English religious literature of the Middle Ages have demonstrated the existence of such

a tradition in works of devotion and meditation.²²⁸ She traces its origins to Latin rhetorical prose, but emphasizes that it developed in English independently of its sources, though continually fed by the inevitable contact which writers of religious prose had with both Latin and vernacular literature throughout this period. This tradition of "fine writing",²²⁹ Dr. Morgan argues, depended for its effectiveness as a vehicle for instruction on the combined use of rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, balanced phrasing, exclamation, rhetorical questions and changes in pace and tone. It also exploited the immediacy and transparency of the native vocabulary and idiom to the same purpose. This summary of the characteristics of devotional prose would manifestly also do as a brief account of the distinctive features of the Cloud author's style, and indeed, he derives much of his strength as a writer of vernacular prose from his grounding in this tradition. The self-consciousness of the style of A Talkyng of þe Loue of God, for example, whose prologue reads,

Men schal fynden lihtliche þis tretys in Cadence. After þe bigynninge. 3if hit beo riht poynted ⁊ Rymed in sum stude. To beo more louesum. to hem þat hit reden. God 3iue vs grace. so for to rede ⁊ þat we mowen haue heuene to vre Mede. Amen²³⁰

anticipates the Cloud author's recognition that the impact of his works on the spiritual life of his readers is a function, in part at least, of prose style, and his evident cultivation of a fully "utilitarian aesthetic".²³¹ It is easy to hear passages such as the following from A Talkyng,

þis is. þat blynde wrecche. þat in his owne ezen. wenep him so vertuous. & is ful of vices. leetep him feir and freoly. And hap þe deueles liknesse. and wenep þat he beo witti. and al ful of sleizþe. And he lokep on his chaffare. þat he is afolte. þat sold hap þis soule. for stinkynde lustes. And changeþ god for þe deuel. And heuene. for helle. He halt him ful dou3ti stalworþe

& hardi. And al day is ouercomen. of him þat haþ no mizte Forte
wip stonde þe moste wrecche of þe world! þat wolde a zeyn him fihte.
He leteþ him gentil and is þe deueles þral....²³²

behind examples such as this on a similar theme from the Cloud Corpus,
which complements pungent onomatopoeic vocabulary with a rhythmic and
heavily alliterated prose, to impress the full horror of sensual self-
indulgence on the reader:

for bot zif it (i.e. þe sensualite) be reulyd by grace in þe wille,
for to suffre meekly & in mesure þe pyne of þe original synne -
þe whiche it felip in absence of needful likyng & in presence of
speedful groching - & þerto also for to streyne it fro luste in
presence of needful lykyng, & fro lusty plesaunce in absence of
speedful groching, elles wil it wrechidly & wantounly weltre, as
a swine in þe myre, in þe welþes of þis woreld & þe foule flessche
so mochel, þat alle oure leuyng schal be more beestly & fleschly
þen ouper manly or goostly. (Cloud 119/2-10)

It is also true, however, that while the prose style exemplified in
A Talkyng adapts readily to other moods and didactic purposes, it seems
in general extravagant by comparison with the prose of the Cloud Corpus
as a whole, which is overall rather quieter and perhaps better attuned
to the subtleties of theological debate.²³³ Examples have already been
cited which illustrate that the Cloud author's assumption of ideas
developed by Gallus, particularly in his explanatory works on the
Dionysian Corpus, tended also to involve the assimilation of the forms
in which they were expressed - often because these forms were integral
to the meaning. It seems, indeed, entirely probable that the English
author absorbed something of the fluency and flexibility of Gallus'
style through his extensive reading in Gallus' works. Perhaps the
process was not wholly conscious, and certainly it would have been
smoothed by the similarity in the function of Gallus' aesthetic to
that which the English author had imbibed from the vernacular prose
tradition. The comparison is compelling, however, between passages

such as this from the Explanacio which is concerned with ch. 4 of the De Divinis Nominibus,

Sicut autem quanto amplius percipitur, tanto ferventius appetitur; ita quanto magis desideratur, tanto habundantius hauritur,²³⁴

and Cloud 70/3-7,

þe abilnes to þis werk is onyd to þe selue werk, wiþoutyn departyng; so þat whoso felip þis werk is abil þerto, & elles none; in so mochel, þat wiþoutyn þis werk a soule is as it were deed, & can not coueite it ne desire it. For as moche as þou wylnest it & desirest it, so mochel hast þou of it, & no more ne no lesse.

In both instances, the insistent rhythm of the prose and the counterbalancing of phrases which correspond in sense and are linguistically of equivalent value, serve to reinforce the theological point that desire is one with possession in the contemplative life.²³⁵ It is not difficult to suppose, on the evidence of such passages as these, that the antithetical habit of thought and expression which is a distinctive feature of Gallus' writing became the Cloud author's own through his inwardness with Gallus' works.

Gallus' prose style may perhaps have impressed itself on the English text of the De Mystica Theologia in a further important respect. This is the inclusion of specific examples, which often give more tangible form to the abstract principles of Dionysian theology and secure the reader's understanding by referring him to his experience of the physical world. In D.H.D. 3/32-3, for example, the translator's interpolation of "as stockes or stones", which identifies the precise level of creation indicated by "þe leest worþi þinges of þees beyng visible þinges", echoes in simpler form the explanatory clause in the Extractio, "(scilicet lapidibus et metallis quae inferiora sunt animatis

et animalibus per naturam)" (570).²³⁶ Similarly, the lengthy elaboration of the sculpture imagery in ch. II of the Deonise Hid Diuinite seems to have been instigated by Gallus, though the interpolation in the English text is on a far larger scale than the expansions in either the Extractio or the Gloss.²³⁷

This last example is evidence, too, of the translator's design to bring Dionysian theology within the scope of his audience's understanding by reaffirming its conformity to the traditional dogma of the Western Church. The strong platonic associations of the image are overlaid by the sustained emphasis on the ascetical procedures of Christian mysticism in the English translator's account of its meaning.²³⁸ Once again, the process of extending the potential readership of the Dionysian Corpus through translation can be seen to entail exposition and christianisation of its theological principles, and the particular influence of Gallus' works on the Latin Corpus, which consistently explain Dionysian doctrine in terms of the received biblical texts of contemplative theology, is apparent in the English author's freedoms with the Sarracenus version of the De Mystica Theologia.

Even so, the extent of the translator's modification of his Latin sources in this instance - it is easily the longest passage of interpolation in the Deonise Hid Diuinite - and the minuteness with which he details the techniques of sculpture, are remarkable. He seems concerned to reassert the relation of the negative way of contemplation to the Christian belief in man's creation in the divine image, and to emphasize the consequent need for divine grace to complement man's own efforts to rediscover this image through contemplation, against the

comparatively bald account of the apophatic method of ascent in both Sarracenus and Gallus. The passage admirably integrates statements of the metaphysical relation of the soul to God, and of man's spiritual essence, which is his faculty for unitive knowledge, to his material form, with a vivid realization of the sculptor's art - the English author, unlike his Latin sources, specifies sculpture in wood, and appeals more directly to his reader's understanding by activating his visual imagination. His treatment of the image also focusses attention on the processes of contemplative prayer by accentuating the parallel attempts of the sculptor, "by craft & by instrumentes" (D.H.D. 6/7), to bring his image into being. Prof. Hodgson similarly attributes the English translator's apparent preference for Gallus' Extractio version of the fourth chapter of the De Mystica Theologia over the text of Sarracenus to his preoccupation with this aspect of contemplative theology:

He incorporated the fourth chapter in its entirety from Vercellensis because it described more directly than the version of Sarracenus the mental processes of the contemplative in which he was primarily interested.²³⁹

The same may also be said of the fifth chapter, where the English translator adopts Gallus' passages of analysis of contemplative procedure:

... þat we torne azein to þe hizest þinges bi som menes, & eend oure denynges at þinges most hize ... (D.H.D. 10/1-3)
... ut ad summa per quaedam media revertamur et in summis negationes terminemus. (Ex. 598)

It is perhaps misleading, however, to suggest, as Prof. Hodgson does both in her textual commentary and by her substitution of the fourth and fifth chapters of the Extractio for the version of Sarracenus in her Latin text of the De Mystica Theologia, printed as Appendix A,

that the English author abruptly abandons Sarracenus in favour of Gallus from the last paragraph of Ch. III. His practice seems, in fact, to be consistent throughout - his translation, that is, is based on Sarracenus with necessary supplementary material drawn from Gallus. Chs. IV and V of the Deonise Hid Diuinite conform exactly to this principle, though their inclusion of expansions inspired by Gallus give them overall a superficially closer resemblance to the Extractio than to the austere catalogue of Dionysian negative propositions of Sarracenus' text. It is significant, for example, that the English author does not incorporate the phrase "scilicet homine puro vel angelo" which qualifies "aliquo existente" in Extractio 600 (D.H.D. 10/8-9 "... us, or of any þat ben"), as he might have been expected to had he been reproducing the text of the Extractio, since, clearly, it agrees with his principles and with earlier interpolations from Gallus in the Deonise Hid Diuinite.

The English author's preference for Gallus' emphatically Christian interpretation of Dionysian theology is, nevertheless, marked, and this, often supported by Gallus' shared aim to produce accurate and effective working texts of Ps.-Dionysius, undoubtedly recommends Gallus' explanatory modifications of Sarracenus' version to the translator of the Deonise Hid Diuinite. Gallus' influence on the English text of the opening prayer to Divine Wisdom (D.H.D. 2/14-27), for example, which emphasizes the conditions of man's union with the transcendent God, has already been commented on. Similar instances are D.H.D. 3/12-18,

For whi, þorou þe ouerpassyng of þiself and alle oþer þinges,
and þus makyng þiself clene fro al wordly, fleschly, & kyndely
likyng in þin affeccioun, and fro al þing þat may be knowen by
þe propre fourme in þi knowyng, þou schalt be drawn up abouen
mynde in affeccioun to þe souereyn-substancial beme of þe god-
liche derknes, alle þinges þus done away,

where the insistence on the moral as well as intellectual aspects of purification derives from Gallus' version,

ab omni concupiscentia et cura absolutus et purgatus (Ex. 568)
Etenim cum te ipsum ab omnia alia mundus excesseris, ita quod
illoque amore non valeas retineri, vel alias impediri, purgatus
ab ultimis animae phantasiis tam spirituales quam divinas
operationes postponendo ... (Gloss 272 A-B),

while Sarracenus reads

cuncta auferens et a cunctis absolutus sursum ageris (568-9);

also 3/19-22 and 27-30, where Sarracenus' references to "indocti" (569, 570), in a passage which warns the reader against divulging the secrets of the text to the uninitiated, are interpreted, following Gallus' definition in the Gloss, "istos autem dico, qui naturalibus rationibus amore existentium innituntur" (272 C), as alluding to,

þees vnwise men 3it wonyng in her wittys ... alle þoo þat ben
fastnyd in knowing & in louyng of þees þinges þat ben knowable
and han bigynnyng (3/19-22)

and

þoo þat ben more vnwise, wonyng 3it not only in here goostly
wittes of natureel philosophy, bot lowe downe byneþe in her
bodely wittes, þe whiche þei hauen bot in comoun with only
beestes. (3/27-30).

The English version also recalls the cautions against transmitting the text to any but those committed to the contemplative life which hedge the Cloud of Unknowing.

There are clearly occasions, however, when the versions of both Gallus and Sarracenus allude to complexities of doctrine which the English author judges inappropriate or perhaps excessively sophisticated

for inclusion in his translation. His criteria for omitting material from his sources are also those which governed his simplification of certain elements of the specialized vocabulary of the De Mystica Theologia. His concern throughout is to reconcile textual accuracy with the needs of his audience for an accessible and comprehensible version of the Dionysian treatise. Not surprisingly, therefore, he does not incorporate Gallus' highly technical account of the location, above mind, of contemplative union -

Cujus loci nomine arbitror designari summas et aeternas archetypas sive rationes sive exemplaria omnium creaturarum quae sunt in Verbo aeterno, quorum intellectuali speculatione Deum cognoscamus. Unde dicuntur ejus loca divinissima, quibus nihil divinius oculis intellectualibus intuemur. Istae autem sunt rationes omnium subjectorum Deo qui cuncta excedit, et per has cognitive praesens fit nobis Deus, nobis desuper infundens et manifestans principales et superiores earumdem rationum quae tamen nobis sunt speculative intelligibiles (Ex. 576) -

in the concluding paragraph of Ch. I, yet he is certainly not shy of the concept in itself, and makes equally precise use of it, though couched in simpler terms, throughout his writings. Similarly, he reproduces the text of Sarracenus where it claims that God is "bope of many wordes & of schorte seiinges" in D.H.D. 4/17 ("et multorum sermonum est bona omnium causa et brevium dictionum" (S. 572-3)), but does not include the statement which follows it, "simul et irrationabilis" (S. 573).²⁴⁰ The English author undoubtedly accepts that paradox is fundamental to the theory and expression of Dionysian theology,²⁴¹ but he seems consistently to underplay the ontological aspects of the De Mystica Theologia in order to focus attention on the negative way which they command. He is equally unwilling to incorporate Gallus' theoretic account of the linguistic principles implied in symbolic theology (D.H.D. 7/28-8/4),²⁴² or to encumber the text with repeated reminders of the

function of negative language to denote God's excess of finite concepts: he thus omits the qualifying phrase "secundum excessum" from Sarracenus' headings to Chs. IV and V, and his description of the "madnes & a parfite vnresonabiltee of alle þat we seyn" (D.H.D. 8/14-15), which characterises the darkness in which the soul encounters God, is not suffixed, as it is in the Extractio, by the explanatory clause "id est rationis et prudentiae incomparabilem excessum" (590). It is also noteworthy, particularly with respect to the translator's source for the last two chapters of the Deonise Hid Diuinite, that the English text does not include the fine analysis of doctrine and language which Gallus accommodates in the expanded form of the Extractio. In each of the following examples, the translator is satisfied with the clarity of the simpler text of Sarracenus:

<u>D.H.D.</u> 9/27	"ne he haþ fantasie"
S. 597	"neque phantasiam ... habet"
<u>Ex.</u> 597	"neque habet phantasiam inferiorem aut superiorem"
<u>D.H.D.</u> 10/5	"ne þer is any vnderstondable touching of hym"
S. 599	"neque tactus est ejus intelligibilis"
<u>Ex.</u> 599	"neque etiam intelligibiliter tangibilis secundum essentiam suam" ²⁴³
<u>D.H.D.</u> 10/14	"ne he is derknes, ne he is lizt"
S. 600	"neque tenebrae, neque lumen"
<u>Ex.</u> 600	"neque ipse est tenebrae a lumine deficientes neque est lumen intelligibile"

On the other hand, it is possible to cite many instances of the translator's own independent additions to the text which clarify and reinforce essential points of doctrine.²⁴⁴ His account of the basic principles of positive and negative theology in D.H.D. 4/1-11 is thus given substance by the interposition of "þat is abouen al knowyng & mynde" (4/3), "ful heiz in hymself, departid fro hem alle" (4/6) and "in sizt of byleue" (4/9): comparable interpolations are "so as it

acordeþ to þe perfeccioun of þis deuinitee" (5/3-4), "And ȝit he in hymself is abouen boþe alle spekyng and alle vnderstondyng" (8/34-5), "ne on any vnderstondable maner afferme him, ne denie him" (10/18-19). Often these clauses expand passages of Sarracenus which are perhaps so condensed as to elude his readers' understanding - his elaboration of his source's account of other works by Ps.-Dionysius in 7/11-24 seems to serve this purpose - and they are frequently calculated to emphasize those points which have most direct and practical bearing on the soul's progress in the contemplative life;²⁴⁵ thus instead of referring to the contemplative's disengagement from "visis et videntibus" (S. 577), the English author freely interprets the text of Sarracenus to mean

And þan he is assoilid boþe fro þe vnderstondable worching miȝtes of his soule, & fro þe obietes of hem, þat is for to sey, alle þoo þinges in þe whiche þei worchen. (D.H.D. 5/11-14).

Conclusion

Detailed study of the Deonise Hid Diuinite in relation to its Latin sources has thus affirmed the intelligence and sensitivity with which the translator manipulated the linguistic resources of his vernacular and reconciled native with essential latinate forms to produce an English version of the De Mystica Theologia which respects the integrity of its sources yet meets the need of its audience for an accessible and intelligible text of Dionysian theology. Further, the investigation of its relation to the remaining works of the Cloud Corpus - principally the Cloud itself and the Book of Privy Counselling - and to possible intermediary sources of Dionysian theology, has frequently given insight into both the author's individual interpretation of that theology and the particular sense in which he applied its traditional

terminology. The exercise of detailing the Cloud author's treatment of language, as it were, at source, where he confronts the dual problem of finding words for a theology which incorporates an explicit denial of the ultimate relevance of language -

As it is now here in þis book, whan we entren into þe derknes þat is abouen mynde, we schul not onliche fynde þe schortyng of wordes, bot as it were a madnes & a parfite vnresonabiltee of alle þat we seyn. (D.H.D. 8/12-15) -

and of inculcating its principles with all possible efficacy, has also evinced the fundamentally Dionysian character of the Cloud author's attitude to language in general, which both grudges and exploits its properties. Perhaps most importantly in terms of future research on the Cloud Corpus, however, this chapter has attempted to establish a precise theological context for the major works of the group, which is arguably the most secure basis from which to approach the persistent enigma of the provenance of the texts.

CONCLUSION

It is perhaps because the influence of Ps.-Dionysius on the Cloud of Unknowing is so conspicuous that many commentators have remarked on it as a truism without due consideration of the precise nature and extent of the English author's debt. The aim of the present thesis has been to compensate for this neglect, and, in concluding, it seems necessary to frame the consensus' account of the text rather differently - to suggest, that is, that it is not simply influenced by Ps.-Dionysius, but that it is essentially a Dionysian work. The difference between the two claims is important. The first is unquestionably apt, but also, in a sense, unhelpful, since it applies in widely varying degrees and respects to a considerable number of texts dating from the later Middle Ages. The second, however, is founded on the inference that the impact of Dionysian theology on Cloud and the treatises most closely related to it is, by contrast, neither superficial nor incidental - that the author's intuition of the way of the soul to God, which is the basis of his theology, coincides with the apophatic approach urged by Ps.-Dionysius, and his contemplative theory is formulated, in consequence, according to Dionysian principles. The Cloud author, that is, formally allies himself with the Dionysian mystical tradition and couches his own experience of the unitive way in the language which had evolved in conjunction with that tradition.

This is not to say, of course, that his theology was immune from other influences. The Dionysian tradition itself as he received it had been considerably tempered in the transmission: notably, it had assimilated significant elements of Victorine and Bernadine spirituality through his principal intermediaries, Thomas Gallus and Hugh of Balma. The Cloud

author also drew extensively at first hand on the common stock of religious literature which was the staple of medieval writers of religious prose, whatever their individual bias: the frequency with which Prof. Hodgson cites parallels with such authorities as Augustine, Bernard, Gregory and Aquinas in her introduction and notes to the texts is a measure of the impact - too diffuse to be treated in this context - which other theological traditions had on his thought.

The submission that Cloud and its companion treatises are in essence works of Dionysian theology is not weakened by the acknowledgment of other contributory influences: it has been formulated on the basis of the author's contemplative theory and his appropriation of the Dionysian vocabulary associated with it, but it is also implicit in the approach to language which conditions his writing as a whole. The theological principles which have been shown to underlie the author's application of specific mystical terms, that is, impinge on his general sense of the function of language and interact with both his didactic and literary instincts. The combination produces a distinctive prose, which is a flexible and finely adjusted vehicle for his instructional purposes, but at the same time mirrors his acute concern with the problems of effecting a working compromise between the properties of language and the tenets of his theology.

It seems apt, then, to conclude this historical study of the Cloud's mystical vocabulary with an account of some of the broader implications of its Dionysian theology for the prose style in which it is written. This done, the substance of this research project will be complete, but the integrity of the thesis seems to demand a more

speculative final section to estimate the significance and possible application of its content. The contention that Cloud and the treatises most closely related to it are in essence Dionysian works and not merely influenced peripherally by principles of Dionysian theology distinguishes them from other original works written in the vernacular at about the same period. Works in translation are exempt from this comparison, of course, and Cloud, indeed, has particularly interesting affinities with the English versions of Ruysbroek which will be touched on in the course of this chapter. These are circumstances which might have considerable bearing on tangential issues such as the authorship, provenance and circulation of the text, where discussion has often foundered on an imprecise assessment of its theological background.

I. The influence of the Cloud author's mystical theology on his approach to language in his original works

One of the chief strengths of the prose in which Cloud is written is that it seems to be created out of the friction between the author and his medium. It depends, that is, on the author's keen sensitivity to language, which is at once an intellectual appreciation of its function and an intuition of its various ways of appealing to the reader's understanding. On the one hand, he is sensible of its potential to persuade, and prompt to exploit it for didactic ends: thus he urges the disciple to curb his sensual faculty,

elles wil it wrechidly & wantounly weltre, as a swine in þe myre,
in þe welþes of þis woreld & þe foule flessche... (Cloud 119/7-9)

Here the author writes emotively, in order to stimulate repulsion against the sin of sensual over-indulgence, by an accumulation of cloying terms which evoke the grossness of hedonism. On the other

hand, however, he is equally aware that the principle operates only too well in reverse - that the power of language is double-edged and as easily tends to corrupt as to redress. He is chary of its capacity for subjugating sense to sound, and early in the second chapter of Cloud, for example, his abrupt admonition to the disciple,

Look up now, weike wreche, & see what þou arte. What arte þou, & what hast þou deserued, þus to be clepid of oure Lorde?
(Cloud 14/16-17),

studied as it is, is as much levelled against the tendency of his own writing to induce mere auditory or aesthetic satisfaction as it is directed against the spiritual inertia of his pupil.

His innate wariness of the ambivalent power of language is reflected in Cloud, as in Deonise Hid Diuinite, in his meticulous concern with the precision of his terminology, and also in the repeated challenges to his reader's expectations of language which sharpen his attention and understanding. Indeed, the vigilance with which the author forestalls possible misapprehensions on the part of his reader is, at times, almost obsessive, and his preoccupation with language is exaggerated by the implications of his theology. But, undoubtedly, the Cloud author's equivocal attitude to language has its negative aspect. His practice is not uniformly consistent with his austere theory of language. It is questionable, for example, whether the intent to reprove the disciple in the passage quoted above (Cloud 119/7-9) fully justifies its ostentatiously literary qualities. Fr. Colledge has already commented on the virtuosity, the gratuitous display of stylistic techniques, as a characteristic weakness of Cloud which is largely eradicated in the author's more mature work, the Book of Privy Counsel.

The latter, he writes,

... lacks, too, some of the author's rhetorical devices so lavishly displayed in his earlier work: at no time, it has been observed, does he show Hilton's love of traditional metaphors, but in The Cloud he shows great fondness for jolting, arresting colloquialisms which he can only use metaphorically. Such figures of speech as 'applying God as a plaster' to one's sick self' are not really very helpful, especially when the author then has to come back to them and explain them in ordinary theological language, but this example is one of only a few to be found in The Book.¹

It is also true, of course, that Privy Counsel was written for the disciple at a more advanced stage of his spiritual development, when the author was able to abandon much of the elementary material of Cloud and its deliberately captivating style. The philosophical bias of the later work - where, as Prof. Hodgson has noted, the author follows the De Divinis Nominibus in which "Dionysius expounded at length the metaphysical basis of his mystical teaching"² - is aptly complemented by the predominantly intellectual appeal of the prose.

Perhaps, indeed, it is ungenerous to take the author to task too severely for indulging his fascination and dexterity with language beyond what seems strictly consistent with his utilitarian concept of its function, when his aesthetic sense seems to have shaped some of the most impressive didactic passages of his work. The economy of his prose, and much of its energy, seem to come from the circumstance that his susceptibility to language and the literary possibilities of its prolific resources is held in check by his recognition that these are in part compliant, in part antithetical, to the demands of his theology. His preoccupation with language - and, by extension, the exceptional level of attention to its meaning and function which is required of the reader - derive, somewhat perversely, from the conviction that God and

the experience of mystic union exceed the scope of words. He summarizes the dilemma in Privy Counsel:

& þerfore no wondre þof I kan not telle þee þe worpines of þis werk wiþ my boystouse beestly tonge. & God forbede þat it scholde be so defoulid in itself for to be streynid vnder þe steringes of a fleschly tonge! Nay, it may not be, & certes it wil not be, & God forbede þat I schuld coueyte it! For al þat is spokyn of it is not it, bot of it. Bot now, siþen we mowe not speke it, lat us speke of it, in confusion of proude wittys... (P.C. 153/15-22)

The need to communicate thus impels him to explore the metaphoric range of language. He is forced, in a sense, to strain his verbal creativity, to adapt and redefine his terms, as an integral part of the process of composition, in order to accommodate his theology.

It should be noted, however, that two other important factors should be taken into account as having influenced his exploratory use of the vernacular: the first - that the author was transposing Dionysian theology into a largely untried medium - has been discussed in relation to the Deonise Hid Diuinite. The second, which will be considered in context below,³ has to do with the general accessibility of the vernacular in contrast to Latin, which was its own guarantor of a restricted audience. The Cloud author's nervousness of being misunderstood seems to have been exacerbated by his recognition that his use of English might introduce a complex theology to an audience which was intellectually and perhaps spiritually ill-equipped to comprehend it. It might even, in view of the theocentric character of his doctrine, leave the author himself open to the charge of heresy.⁴

But these are secondary concerns. The fundamental conflict is between Dionysian mystical theology and language as a medium, and the

Cloud author has been shown to have adopted many of the specific terms and formulae which had evolved with the Dionysian tradition. His pre-occupation with the possibilities and limitations of language is shared with other writers of the same school, but it also involves exploring the psychology of communication in a way which is highly individualistic and has no counterpart in Gallus' or Balma's expositions of Dionysian theology and vocabulary.

The central problem - for the author does indeed see it as such - is with the nature of metaphor itself: the transference of terms which properly describe one object to an analogous object in a non-literal sense. It works, that is, by association, and the Cloud author exploits its functions ambitiously as a means of conveying spiritual realities which are outside the register of words in their primary sense. Thus the unitive experience, which is not reducible to literal terms of description, is suggested figuratively through metaphors of darkness and cloud, and the Cloud author conscientiously explains how they are to be understood:

& wene not, for I clepe it a derknes or a cloude, þat it be any cloude congelid of þe humours þat fleen in þe ayre, ne ȝit any derknes soche as is in þin house on niztes, when þi candel is oute. For soche a derknes & soche a cloude maist þou ymagin wiþ coriouste of witte, for to bere before þin ize in þe liztest day of somer; & also azenswarde in þe derkist nizt of wynter þou maist ymagin a clere schinyng lizt. Lat be soche falsheed; I mene not þus. For when I sey derknes, I mene a lackyng of knowyng; as alle þat þing þat þou knowest not, or elles þat þou hast forzetyn, it is derk to þee, for þou seest it not wiþ þi goostly ize. & for þis skile it is not clepid a cloude of þe eire, bot a cloude of vnknowyng, þat is bitwix þee & þi God.
(Cloud 23/13-24)

The author begins by establishing the literal meaning of his terms, emphasizing their relationship to natural phenomena by the specific

and circumstantial quality of his definitions. Because they have this physical point of reference, he stresses, the terms convey meaning, even in isolation from the phenomena which they describe, by activating the visual imagination through memory. In the context of his theology, however, the author seeks to suppress the imaginative appeal of his vocabulary: he refers it directly to the reader's intelligence, in order to induce him, although it seems a contradiction in terms, to envisage intellectually a state in which all the natural faculties of perception are transcended.

The Cloud author, then, does not propose to undermine the literal sense altogether. On the contrary, he respects that the coherence of the figurative sense depends largely on the significance of his terms at the literal level. He values language as an efficient vehicle for spiritual direction, much as he respects the records of physical manifestations of divine power in scripture:

For we schul not so fede us of þe frute þat we schul dispise þe tree; ne so drynke þat we schul breke þe cuppe when we haue dronken. þe tre & þe cuppe I clepe þis visible miracle, & alle semely bodely obseruance þat is acordyng & not lettyng þe werke of þe spirite. þe frute & þe drync I clepe þe goostly bemening of þees visible miracles, & of þees semely bodely obseruances, as is lifyng up of oure izen & oure handes vnto heuen.

(Cloud 107/20-108/4)

He does, however, attempt to frustrate the normal consequences of metaphor, to forestall the impulse to interpret the figurative meaning of his terms by way of the literal, which tends to dissipate the reader's concentration on his transcendent object in mental images of related sense phenomena. Metaphor is inherently divisive, and in this sense it is alien to the Cloud author's theology, which affirms the integrity of the soul's unitive impulse. In Privy Counsel, he

urges the disciple,

& þerfore holde þee hole & vnscaterid as forþ as þou maist bi
grace... (P.C. 147/15-16).

The direction of his theology is towards reducing the distinctions which normally obtain between perceiver and perceived until, in the unitive experience, they cease to exist: the single essence of self converges with the essence of God, and the act of experiencing becomes one with the object of the experience. Again in Privy Counsel he writes,

In þis tyme it is þat þou boþe seest þi God & þi loue, & nakidly felist hym also bi goostly onyng to his loue in þe souereyn poynte of þi spirit, as he is in hymself, bot blyndely, as it may be here, vtterly spoylid of þiself & nakidly cloþed in hymself as he is, vncloþed & not lappid in any of þees sensible felynges (be þei neuer so sweet ne so holy) þat mowen falle in þis liif. Bot in purete of spirit propirly & parfitely he is parceyuid & felt in himself as he is, fer lengþid fro any fantasye or fals opinion þat may falle in þis liif.

þis sizt & þis felyng of God, þus in hymself as he is, may no more be departyd fro God in hymself (to þin vnderstondyng þat þus felist or þus seest) þen may be departyd God himself fro his owne beyng, þe whiche ben bot one boþe in substaunce & also in kynde. So þat as God may not be fro his beyng for onheed in kynde, so may not þat soule, þat þus seep & felip, be fro þat þing þat he þus seep & felep for onheed in grace. (P.C. 169/17-170/3)

Here the Cloud author expresses the unitive experience metaphorically in terms of "nakedness" and "blindness", but he hedges this description with an account couched in less esoteric theological language of the precise cognitive processes involved. This too, however, requires qualifying, since concepts of sight and feeling have the force of metaphor in this context: they are the nearest approximation to the soul's unitive experience, that is, which man's cognitive vocabulary affords, but they nevertheless imply a distinction between the perceiver and the perceived which is wholly at odds with the Cloud author's theory of union.

The use of words at all in this connexion is thus a compromise with the author's need to communicate his mystical theology and, sometimes, as he acknowledges in Cloud ch. 37, with the soul's urgent impulse to express the intensity and immediacy of its spiritual experience. It is a compromise because, as the Cloud author emphasizes, speech is a physical thing with connotations which are intrinsically antithetical to the spiritual realities it here denotes:

For þof al þat a þing be neuer so goostly in itself, neuerþeles
þit þif it schal be spoken of, siþen it so is þat speche is a
bodely werk wrouzt wip þe tonge, þe whiche is an instrument of
þe body, it behouep alweis be spoken in bodely wordes (Cloud 114/6-9).

Prof. J.A.Burrow, in his recent article "Fantasy and Language in The Cloud of Unknowing", has noted that the Cloud author is making two related claims about the nature of language here:

The phrase 'bodely wordes' has a double meaning here. It refers to the fact that language is a physical activity (a "werk wrought with the tonge"), and also to the fact that language expresses ideas in physical terms ("up", "down", etc.).⁵

The incompatibility of the physical and the spiritual, which imposes a metaphoric function on language in relation to the Cloud author's mystical theology, is thus consequent on man's earthly condition. The two aspects of man's nature, he reaffirms, will only be reconciled in eternity:

& þan we schul be maad so sotyl in body & in soule togeders, þat
we schul be þan swiftly where us liste bodely, as we ben now in
oure þouzte goostly; wheþer it be up or doune, on o syde or on
oper, bihinde or before. Alle I hope schal þan be iliche good,
as clerkes seyne. Bot now þou mayst not come to heuen not bodely,
bot goostly. & þit it schal be so goostly þat it schal not be on
bodely maner: nowþer upwardes ne donwardes, ne on o side ne on
oper, behynde ne before. (Cloud 110/5-13)⁶

This restatement of the doctrinal position introduces a discussion

of the metaphoric mode which extends over three chapters (chs. 59-61). The author is disturbed by the spatial and temporal dimensions which language used in this way still retains: they distract the contemplative from his concentration on the transcendent and people his mind with extraneous ideas which anchor it to the finite. Though in ch. 5, for example, he defines the proper contemplative attitude to God and man by expressing it as a spatial relationship, he repeatedly cautions the disciple against literal interpretation of his terms:

& wite wel þat alle þoo þat setten hem to be goostly worchers & namely in þe werk of þis book, þat þof al þei rede "lifte up" or "go in", þof al þat þe werke of þis book be clepid a steryng, neuerþeles 3it hem behouep to haue a ful besy beholdyng, þat þis steryng streche neiþer up bodely ne in bodely, ne 3it þat it be any soche steryng as is from o stede to anoper. & þof al þat it be sumtyme cleped a rest, neuerþeles 3it þei schul not þink þat it is any soche rest as is any abidyng in a place wipouten remowing þerfro. For þe perfeccion of þis werke is so pure & so goostly in itself, þat & it be wel & trewly conceyuid, it scal be seen fer lengþid fro any steryng & fro any stede.

& it schuld by sum skyle raper be clepid a sodeyn chaunging þen any steedly steryng. For tyme, stede, & body, þees þre schuld be forzeten in alle goostly worching. (Cloud 110/14-111/5)

The spiritual dangers attendant on a narrowly literal-minded approach to theological language are graphically described by the Cloud author (in chs. 45, 52 and 53 especially), who is both appalled by the aberration of misguided contemplatives and piqued by their ludicrousness. He is equally sceptical of the indiscriminately figurative approach, however, and as Prof. Burrow has shown, he avoids blurring distinctions between the two modes by exaggerating, where appropriate, the physicality of his language:

Physical images are unavoidable in all human language; but we must constantly struggle to keep them distinct from the spiritual realities about which they enable us to speak. And that, paradoxically, means keeping them physical. It is dangerous to attempt to 'spiritualize' them. 'Ghostly conceits of bodily things', we recall, are among the fantastic products of the

disordered imagination of fallen man.⁷

Yet language acts consecutively as a stimulus to the imagination and has protean qualities which run counter to the Cloud author's contemplative theory. William Johnston states the problem well in his book, The Mysticism of 'The Cloud of Unknowing':

For words are successive things; they move, causing images and concepts to flit across the mind. Hence they intensify the sense of time. Contemplative prayer gets away from matter, away from time, and 'it is best when it is in pure spirit, without special thought or any pronouncing of word' (Cloud 78/20-22).⁸

The tendency of Dionysian negative theology, conversely, is away from multiplicity to singleness: the soul, that is, progressively refines its desire until it is concentrated entirely on the essential being of God. At the same time, the contemplative works to subdue the various sensory and intellectual faculties which divert him with impressions of natural phenomena until his consciousness exists only in the "higest & þe souereynest pointe of þe spirit" (Cloud 74/12-13) - the metaphor used by the Cloud author for the pure substance of the soul which encounters the corresponding essence of God in union. The corollary, in linguistic terms, is that normal semantic distinctions are finally superseded, and words of directly contradictory meaning are equally apt to represent a reality which is beyond all contraries. Thus, although the Cloud author concedes that there is a certain appropriateness about representing Christ's departure from earth as an ascent to heaven, he insists that adverbs which express varying physical locations converge in meaning when they are applied to an undifferentiated subject:

For heuen goostly is as neiz doun as up, & up as down, bihinde as before, before as behynde, on o syde as oper, in so moche þat whoso had a trewe desire for to be at heuyn, þen þat same tyme he were in heuen goostly. (Cloud 112/10-13).

Equally meaningful, in this context, is thus effectively equally meaningless, and the Cloud author acknowledges, in the passage which Johnston refers to, that the purest form of contemplative prayer is indeed mute. The process of giving it expression is a material intrusion in a wholly spiritual activity, not least because speech takes place in time and relies on bodily functions. More importantly, the introduction of language insinuates an intellectual dimension - the correlation between "specyall pouȝt or any pronounsyng of worde" (Cloud 78/21-2) is specifically noted - and attaches an analytical mode to an experience wherein the normal distinctions between the perceiver and the perceived are transcended.

The instinct of the contemplative is still to find words for his experience, and as a palliative the Cloud author recommends him to concentrate on single monosyllabic words such as "synne" or "God".⁹ The physical act of pronunciation and the extent to which language obtrudes upon his contemplative prayer are thus reduced to a minimum. Further, the Cloud author establishes a connexion between the contemplative discipline and the economy of these terms:

I maad no force, þof þou haddest now-on-dayes none oþer meditations of þin owne wrechidnes, ne of þe goodnes of God - I mene ȝif þou fele þee þus steryd by grace & by counseyl - bot soche as þou mayst haue in þis worde SYNNE & in þis worde GOD, or in soche oþer, whiche as þe list; not brekyng ne expounyng þees wordes with coryouste of witte, in beholdyng after þe qualitees of þees wordes, as þou woldest by þat beholdyng encrees þi deuocion. I trowe it schuld neuer be so in þis caas & in þis werk. Bot holde hem alle hole þeese wordes; & mene synne a lump, þou wost neuer what, none oþer þing bot þiself. (Cloud 73/7-16).

The simplicity of the soul's unitive impulse, that is, is mirrored linguistically in the monosyllabic form of the words "synne" and "God":

as the intellectual and sensual faculties are recollected and the soul concentrates a unified desire on the essential being of God, so the simplicity of these terms is an artificial thing, the product of the compression of the contemplative's entire meaning into a single syllable. They resist, by virtue of their brevity, the kind of analysis to which more complex sentence structures and even polysyllabic words are susceptible because of their composite character. The natural propensity of the intellect is to dissect, and the Cloud author insists that the non-discursive character of the unitive impulse is a condition of its integrity. The contemplative is thus urged to discourage the divisive tendency of the intellect by exploiting the synthetic power of words such as "synne" and "God". As early as the seventh chapter, the author gives a stirring commendation of the efficacy of monosyllabic words in focussing the unitive impulse:

& 3if þee list haue þis entent lappid & foulden in o worde, for þou schuldest haue betir holde þerapon, take þee bot a litil worde of o silable; for so it is betir þen of two, for euer þe schorter it is, þe betir it acordeþ wiþ þe werk of þe spirite. & soche a worde is þis worde GOD or þis worde LOUE. Cheese þee wheþer þou wilt, or anoþer as þe list: whiche þat þee likeþ best of o silable. & fasten þis worde to þin herte, so þat it neuer go þens for þing þat bifalleþ.

þis worde schal be þi scheeld & þi spere, wheþer þou ridest on pees or on werre. Wiþ þis worde þou schalt bete on þis cloude & þis derknes abouen þee. Wiþ þis worde þou schalt smite doun al maner þou3t vnder þe cloude of for3eting... (Cloud 28/10-20).

In both cases, however, his sanction of such uses is coupled with a warning against expounding the terms: they are to be left "al hole, & not broken ne vndon" (Cloud 29/3-4). His caution is not inspired solely by his aversion to sophistry. The effect of analysing the words is to factorize their meaning, and this thwarts the unifying tendency of their monosyllabic form. The Cloud author emphasizes the analogy

between this procedure and the activity of meditation, which, it has been maintained, has no part in his concept of the unitive way. Both are regarded, in relation to his unitive theology, as degenerative processes. Thus in the seventh chapter, he insists that although meditation on the divine attributes and on personal sin may instigate the soul's desire to know God, they ultimately frustrate its progress to union:

For paraenture he wil bryng to þi minde diuerse fulfeire & wonderful pointes of his kyndnes, & sey þat he is ful swete & ful louyng, ful gracious & ful mercyful. & 3if þou wilt here him, he coueiteþ no beter; for at þe last he wil þus jangle euer more & more til he bring þee lower to þe mynde of his Passion. & þere wol he lat þe see þe wonderful kyndnes of God; & if þou here him, he kepeþ no beter. For sone after he wil lat þee see þin olde wrechid leuing; & paraenture, in seing & þinkyng þerof, he wil bryng to þi mynde som place þat þou hast wonid in before þis tyme. So þat at þe last, er euer wite þou, þou schalt be scaterid þou wost neuer where. (Cloud 27/3-13).

The contemplative, that is, relapses into disconcerting memories of specific sins instead of focussing on sin as "a lump, þou wost neuer what, none oper þing bot þiself" (Cloud 73/15-16). He may cultivate this abstract consciousness of the self as a sinful entity which hinders the perfect union of the soul with God by simple concentration on the word "sin". But language is a plastic medium: each term is a compound of meaning and suggestion, and is liable to seduce the contemplative into the kind of analysis which fragments his consciousness. It must be kept "hole" (Cloud 29/4, 73/15), just as, the Cloud author reiterates, the contemplative himself must enter "hole & vnscenterid" into the unitive way.

II. Notes on the history of the Cloud Corpus in manuscript

The traditional and still largely prevalent view has been that the works of the Cloud author achieved immediate and widespread

popularity. The earliest authority whose opinion is generally cited on this point is D.M. M'Intyre; his article, "Cloud of Unknowing", states that the texts "walked up and down at deer rates" during the fifteenth century.¹⁰ M'Intyre's assumptions about the circulation of the texts had an influential advocate in Prof. Hodgson, whose examination of the manuscripts which contain Cloud for her E.E.T.S. edition of this and Privy Counselling led her to conclude,

Judging from their distant relationship to each other, the seventeen extant manuscripts must represent only a very small proportion of the total number of transcriptions.¹¹

Prof. Hodgson's figure of seventeen manuscripts includes two which contain Latin versions of Cloud (MSS Pembroke College, Cambridge 221 and Bodleian 856) and one of the Book of Privy Counselling only (MS Cambridge University Library, li.vi.31).¹² The number of extant copies is undoubtedly generous by comparison with the meagre survivals of some medieval texts, and it is perhaps not surprising that scholars have sometimes taken their existence as a testimony to the widespread currency of this author's work during the later middle ages. Dom McCann, for example, writes,

The number of existing MSS certainly points to a considerable vogue,¹³

and Dom David Knowles puts forward the same argument in The English Mystical Tradition -

the number of manuscripts, in which the numerous variants and contaminations are proof of a long and numerous ancestry, are alike witnesses of the immediate and lasting vogue which these treatises attained among religious and the devout¹⁴ -

and again in his article, "The Excellence of The Cloud",

We know that this body of writings attained a very wide popularity in religious circles immediately upon its appearance, that it formed the basis for the mystical doctrine of a still more popular writer, Walter Hilton, and that it remained until the Reformation one of the chief books of formation in contemplative houses, and in particular in the London Charterhouse, that nursery of martyrs.¹⁵

More recently, C.S. Nieva, in his study of Cloud, This Transcending God, echoes the same inference - "the writing actually received a wide circulation"¹⁶ - and Wolfgang Riehle is at once more specific in defining the notion of "widespread" popularity and more sweeping in his conclusions: he offers the hypothesis that the audience for the text was not only considerable among religious but extended to lay communities of devout men and women:

Eine genaue Prüfung dieses Textes zeigt aber, daß der Prolog dieses Werkes über den speziellen Adressaten hinaus auch einen größeren Kreis von Lesern anvisierte, die als Laien aktiv im Leben standen und nicht ihre ganze Zeit der Kontemplation widmen könnten. Daß gerade ein Werk wie die Cloud eine beachtliche Verbreitung und hohes Ansehen erlangt hat bezeugt darüber hinaus die handschriftliche Überlieferung. In seinem Traktat pe Book of Priue Conselling bemerkt der Cloud - Autor ausdrücklich, er schreibe zwar speziell für einen bestimmten Leser ("in specyal to þiself" (135/2)) und nicht für ein allgemeines ("general") Publikum, habe aber nichts dagegen, wenn sein Buch auch von anderen, ähnlich interessierten Leuten gelesen werde. Es kann kein Zweifel darüber bestehen, daß oftmals dieselben Werke, die primär für ein Klöster - und Einsiedlerpublikum geschrieben wurden, zugleich auch für eine noch größere laikale Leserschaft mit bestimmt waren. Die Wahl der englischen Sprache legt ja die Erweiterung des Publikums geradezu nahe und trug dazu bei, daß sich die Grenzen zwischen monastischer und laikaler Leserschaft verwischten.¹⁷

Setting aside for the present the larger issues raised by Riehle's theory as to the character and status of the likely audience of Cloud, the validity of the premise on which he bases his theory, namely that the text circulated widely in manuscript, is by no means certain. Indeed, work on the Cloud manuscripts subsequent to Prof. Hodgson's

editions - in particular by Dr. A.I. Doyle - and research in tangential subjects, combine to tip the scales of argument in favour of the opposite supposition. What follows, therefore, is an attempt to assemble information from these various sources in order to estimate its cumulative importance for the study of Cloud. The discussion of Cloud in manuscript, it should be said, has no pretensions to being original research. Its purpose is essentially to explore the possible significance of the work of specialists in the field of manuscripts to the drift of this thesis - to establish, that is, whether there might be clues to the Cloud's provenance in its manuscript history, and whether the actual circumstances of its circulation are consistent with the image of the text and its likely audience which has emerged from the preceding dissertation.

Prof. Hodgson, in her discussion of manuscripts in the two volumes of her edition of the texts attributed to the Cloud author, discriminates between those which contain Cloud and Privy Counselling and those in which the less substantial works of the Corpus variously occur.¹⁸ The same distinction has been retained here, since it is both convenient and corresponds to the usual grouping of the texts in manuscript. Prof. Hodgson distinguishes three main categories in the sixteen manuscripts which contain Cloud itself on the grounds of variant readings and phonology:

GROUP A	MS Harleian 674 MS University Library, Cambridge li.vi.39
GROUP B	MS Harleian 2373 MS University Library, Cambridge Kk.vi.26 MS Trinity College, Dublin 122

The third group has one subdivision:

GROUP C¹

MS Royal 17 C XXVI
MS Royal 17 C XXVII
MS Royal 17 D V
MS University College, Oxford 14

GROUP C²

MS Parkminster D. 176
MS Bodleian 576
MS University Library, Cambridge Ff.vi.41
MS Douce 262

Prof. Hodgson posits a common ancestor for Group A and for Group B, and a possible common ancestor for Group C¹. Of the Latin versions, the text of Methley's translation in MS Pembroke 221 seems to be most closely related to those of the Group B manuscripts, whereas the version in MS Bodleian 856 seems to be related to the inferior and corrupted text of MS Harleian 959. The same manuscript grouping holds good for Privy Counselling, and the manuscript in which it occurs alone, MS University Library, Cambridge li.vi.31, seems to have affinities with Group C. Prof. Hodgson demurs from singling out any one group as being closest to the author's original text and assumes at least one intermediate manuscript between the original text and the common ancestor of each group. She concludes, however, that MS Harl. 674 best represents the language of the original: its dialect is that of the north part of the central East Midlands.

Dr. A.I. Doyle's discussion of the same manuscripts in his unpublished thesis, A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th and early 16th Centuries, with special reference to the part of the Clergy therein,¹⁹ acknowledges a considerable debt to Prof. Hodgson's classification and does not challenge it radically.²⁰ Her inference that the distinct manuscript groupings indicate the widespread currency of the texts nevertheless loses much of its force in consequence of Dr. Doyle's

proposed connexions between her manuscript groups A and C. Where he differs from her dating of the manuscripts, it is to narrow the likely period of composition. His chronology, therefore, reads:

XV in.	Harl. 674
XV med.	Univ. Coll. 14
XV med./ex.	Harl. 2373 Harl. 959
XV ex.	Tr. Coll. 122 Kk.vi. 26 Royal 17 D V Royal 17 C XXVI
XVI in.	Douce 262 Bodl.576 Park. D. 176
XVI ex.	Royal 17 C XXVII
XVII ex.	Ff.vi. 41

MS li.vi.39 is written in a variety of hands dating from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, and Cloud itself is in a fifteenth century hand. MS li.vi.31 of Privy Counsel is also a fifteenth century manuscript, and the two Latin versions of Cloud in Pemb. 221 and Bodl.856 date from XV med. and XV ex. respectively. The fact that two are very late manuscripts and are closely linked, besides, to earlier ones - Royal 17 C XXVII is copied from Royal C XXVI - makes a prima facie case against taking the number of copies of a text as a reliable guide in itself to its popularity and distribution.

The significance of Dr. Doyle's study, however, consists principally in its interpretative approach to the manuscript tradition of Cloud; it ranges more broadly than Prof. Hodgson's analysis to take account not only of the provenance and character of these manuscripts, but also of the principles on which they were compiled and the evidence

of their handling by early readers, as having bearing on the issue of circulation. The considerable interest in the Cloud among the Carthusians emerges as a dominant factor in Dr. Doyle's review of the transmission of the text in manuscript; in addition to the copies of certain Carthusian provenance, he identifies others which seem likely to have come from the same source, and thus modifies the pattern of distribution as suggested by Prof. Hodgson's grouping of the manuscripts.²¹ Of the manuscripts of the English text of Cloud, three have inscriptions which guarantee them as Carthusian products: MS Harl. 2373 was written at Mount Grace (a marginal note on f.70^b refers to an older book of the same house - "In veteri libro huius domus videlicet Montis gracie - De quattuor gradibus humilitatis nulla fit mentio") and was annotated by James Grenehalgh of Sheen in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century; MSS Douce 262 and Park. D. 176 were both copied at the London Charterhouse²² (the former, also annotated by Grenehalgh, has the inscription on f.1^a "Liber domus Salutacionis matris dei prope londinium ordinis Carthusiensis", and a note in a sixteenth century hand on f.118^b at the end of the text of Cloud, "Scriptor huius libri erat d. Willelmus Tregooz professor istius domus videlicet Londonianum Cart(usie)"; the Parkminster manuscript has a similar colophon on f.95^b in a late sixteenth century hand, "Liber domus salutacionis beatissime virginis Marie iuxta London ordinis Chartusiensis per M. Chawncy quem exaravit sanctus Wille Exmewe").²³ Dr. Doyle adds to these a further two manuscripts which almost certainly belonged to the Carthusians: MS Kk.vi.26, a manuscript containing some northern forms from the same source as MS Harl. 2373 (Doyle comments on the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century inscription "Jhesus Maria Hieronimus" (ff.46^b - 47), that the cult of St. Jerome in England

seems to have been concentrated in the charterhouses and at Syon), and MS Bodl. 576,²⁴ which seems to come from the same background as the Douce and Parkminster manuscripts - a group connected with the metropolitan charterhouse. MS Tr. Coll., Dublin 122, another northern volume, is also apparently close to Harl. 2373 and Kk.vi.26 in terms of date, text and language. The manuscript of Richard Methley's Latin version of Cloud (translated at Mount Grace Charterhouse in 1491), MS Pemb. 221, is again Carthusian. Dr. Doyle suggests that the translation draws on more than one manuscript of the types in Carthusian ownership - probably including the original of Harl. 2373 - and that the MS Pemb. 221 itself was possibly written at Sheen: its hand, he notes, resembles that of the Sheen scribe William Darker (d.1512/13). Fr. Colledge, in his article "The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God: a fifteenth-century English Ruysbroek Translation",²⁵ assigns the manuscript to Mount Grace:

..since the Latin text of The Cloud in this manuscript, and the English interlinear and marginal glosses which an annotator has added, agree very closely with a type of English text at least one extant example of which was written at Mount Grace, and since the colophon which is added in yet another hand, and which ascribes the two translations to Methley, seems to show personal knowledge of him:

... per Dompnum Richardum ffurth alias de Methley, domus assumptionis eiusdem beatissime virginis Marie ordinis carthusiensis (f.99a)

it may be assumed that the whole of the manuscript, additions, annotations and all, is the work of various Mount Grace Carthusians.

Michael G. Sargent, however, confirms Dr. Doyle's conjecture that the hand of Pemb. 221 is that of William Darker of Sheen, and adds this to the list of manuscripts annotated by Grenehalgh. These annotations, Sargent goes on, demonstrate that Grenehalgh compared the manuscript extensively with Douce 262 and that, further, some textual readings

in the Parkminster manuscript, which are unique except in Grenehalgh's annotations of Douce 262 and Pemb. 221, suggest that either Grenehalgh annotated these two manuscripts against the Parkminster manuscript, or that the Parkminster manuscript is in fact a copy of Douce 262 into which Grenehalgh's marginal annotations have been inserted. Harl. 2373, however, also annotated by Grenehalgh, does not seem to have formed part of this close textual group. The Carthusian manuscripts which include Cloud seem, therefore, to fall into two distinguishable though not completely unrelated categories. Dr. Doyle also associates the manuscript of Privy Counsel, li.vi.31, with the texts of the Douce group.

If, therefore, the number of extant manuscripts of Cloud is proof that the text enjoyed a vogue of any kind during the Middle Ages, the remarkably high proportion of Carthusian manuscripts among those which still survive argues the popularity of the text during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries within the strictest and most exclusive contemplative order in England and perhaps, by extension, at Syon. / It should, of course, be noted that the manuscripts which have been considered so far are not the earliest known copies of the text: both Dr. Doyle and Prof. Hodgson agree in dating the East Midland manuscripts Harl. 674 and li.vi.39 earlier.²⁶ Moreover, the intrinsic significance of the survival of so many Carthusian manuscripts should not be overestimated. The unique conditions for the production and circulation of religious works in manuscript within the order and the dedication of the Carthusians to the transmission of, for them, important texts in this way, are now widely recognized: research continues to add to the list of texts which were cultivated by the Carthusians and circulated narrowly among the English charterhouses, and some are known to have

been introduced to this country by the order.²⁷ These, then, are necessary reservations. But clearly, the fact that so many of the extant manuscripts of Cloud are interrelated, and the possibility that their circulation was restricted to the order which produced them, must devalue indiscriminate claims that the audience for the text was large and composite.

Investigation of the non-Carthusian manuscripts of Cloud tends to support this view of a restricted readership. Most of these, too, are in Dr. Doyle's opinion religious. He comments on two particular features of MS Harl. 674 which point to this conclusion:²⁸ the first item in the manuscript (f.1^a A Tretis of Discrecyon of Spirites) is written with a column for a gloss or notes in Latin, though it is only filled in for a few pages; secondly, the passage in ch.10 of Cloud which accommodates the possibility that its potential readers might lead different lives -

& arte oblischid vnto any degree in deuoute leuyng in Holi Chirche, what-so it be, priue or aperte, & þerto þat wil be rewlid not after þeire owne wille & þeire owne witte, bot after þe wille & þe counsel of þeire souereins, what-so þei be, religious or seculeres (36/8-12) -

was originally present but later erased. Dr. Doyle observes that hardly anyone but the strictest religious would have cause to delete a passage such as this. The same passage, he notes, is absent from li.vi.39, and the contents of this volume reinforce the impression that it is religious.²⁹ He judges a further three manuscripts to be in all probability religious: MS Harl. 959 - he remarks on the interpolations by an amateur scribe that "superfluous interpolation and translation, as they may seem to us, were means of keen study

in the circumstances of cloistered religious life and devotion";³⁰ the manuscript of the second Latin version of the text, MS Bodl. 856; MS University College 14.³¹ Of the remaining manuscripts which contain Cloud, two are closely related to the group of religious manuscripts to which MSS Harl. 674, li.vi.³⁹ and University College 14 belong: these are, MSS Royal 17 D V and 17 C XXVI.³² MS Royal 17 C XXVII, a copy of Royal 17 CXXVI, belongs to the same group, though it is significantly later.³³ Like the seventeenth century manuscript Ff. vi.41,³⁴ it is too remote from the medieval situation to have particular relevance to the present discussion.

When the tradition of Cloud in manuscript is put to this kind of scrutiny, therefore, the dominant impression is of a text whose circulation was limited, if not in area, then almost certainly in terms of the composition of its audience. Dialectal variations in the language of the different manuscripts and, in some cases, factual evidence of provenance, prove that the text was read and copied as far apart physically as London and the Charterhouse of Mount Grace in Yorkshire. Equally, however, the remarkably close ties which link the surviving manuscripts and the religious milieu in which the text seems consistently to have moved argue persuasively that it was in other respects current only within a very restricted sphere. Dr. Doyle is insistent that a large number of extant manuscripts of a text is compatible with the hypothesis of a narrow circulation, and he disputes Prof. Hodgson's conclusion, in the case of Cloud, that the survival of so many copies is indicative of a heavy loss:

The considerable number of surviving copies of the Cloud are so closely related that the quantity and provenance of the lost ones may be estimated approximately, as not so very much

greater nor very different; in contrast with the great proliferation and complication of the Scale.³⁵

He applies similar criteria to the manuscripts which contain the remaining texts of the Cloud Corpus, and again dissociates the issue of general popularity from the circumstances of their broad geographical distribution in manuscript:

However they originated, the epistles, usually assigned with The Cloud, on general grounds of language and thought, to the end of the fourteenth century, were soon known in the most earnest religious houses and thereafter moved chiefly among them with few extensions beyond. Most of the manuscripts go back to a common collective archetype of East Midland origin, but the range of place ultimately covered by the descendants was wide... The relation of these manuscripts and texts was evidently so close that we may assume a comparatively small number of lost copies, though certainly exceeding in total the extant ones, and a restricted range of contexts which they might have reached. The same facts will be even more plainly revealed by examination of the Cloud itself.³⁶

The hypothesis that Cloud - group texts had only a limited circulation may be substantiated on other grounds. The corroborative evidence is diverse and the significance of some of it, taken in isolation, is inconclusive. In sum, however, it is convincingly coherent. The history of the texts in print, for example, is hard to reconcile with the view that they were transmitted freely and widely. H.S. Bennett, in the first volume of his English Books and Readers which deals with the period 1475-1557,³⁷ emphasizes the considerable demand for devotional works in the vernacular during the whole of this time. In lay and religious contexts alike, such works were valued for the accessibility of their teaching, and they were a particularly important means of instruction for nuns and anchoresses with little or no Latin education. A large and assured market of this kind was a strong incentive to printers in their choice of texts for publication, and in this sense, the lists

of early printed books naturally reflect trends which already existed in manuscript; the inclusion of a text among them is thus a fair indicator that its popularity was established. Alternatively, however, a printer might guarantee a return on his expenditure by producing books to specific commissions, in which case his market, though possibly small, was still dependable. It is uncertain, then, what inference may confidently be drawn concerning the circulation of a text in manuscript from the single fact that it was not printed at this time, when the circumstances which ensured publication could vary so radically. Nevertheless, the absence of Cloud from the handlist of publications by Wynkyn de Worde, 1492-1535,³⁸ is notable, since authors and texts which are in other respects comparable with Cloud are well represented: these include The Orchard of Syon (1519),³⁹ the Book of Margery Kempe ((1501)), the Scale of Perfection (1494, at the request of Margaret, mother of Henry VII, and reprinted 1519, 1525 and 1533), and various texts by Rolle, some of which were reprinted more than once, between 1506 and 1519. Prof. Birrell notes that MS Ff.vi.41 was a copy of Cloud and Privy Counsel prepared for the printer by William Parish in 1647, but that the text was never in fact published until the nineteenth century.⁴⁰

The neglect of the printers extended also to the other works of the Cloud author. Deonise Hid Diuinite was first published in 1653, in the second volume of John Everard's Some Gospel Treasures Opened, where it appears with selections from Cusa's De Visione Dei, Tauler, Eckhart and Hermes Trismegistus.⁴¹ The Pistle of Preier, Discrecioun of Stirings and Discrescyon of Spirites were printed once, in the Pepwell edition of 1521 (S.T.C. 20972): the source of this seems to

have been identical with that of MS Bodl. 576, which is probably a Carthusian manuscript.⁴² Dr. Doyle, however, stresses that the circumstances of this edition preclude its being taken as a measure of the texts' general popularity, and tend, on the contrary, to imply that it answered a comparatively narrow, specialized demand:

One edition, which these epistles would scarcely have received if there had not been some special understanding between the printers and the suppliers of the copy, who probably would absorb or assure the absorbance of a substantial part of the issue, sufficed to satisfy the potential market, before it was abruptly abolished fifteen to twenty years later. It is, in fact, not printing so much as reprinting which is an index of broader popularity; the contrast here with Mixed Life, or even the Counsels of Isidore is noteworthy, while the absence of the Mirror of Sinners or the Form of Living from this field of comparison is far from implying any inferiority in either. A more narrowly cultivated piece might, in the first half century or so of printing in English, have a better chance of being put into printed form, through effective sponsorship, which a widely-known work might lack in the absence of a completely commercial system of publication.⁴³

The evidence is thus weighted against the assumption that any of the texts ascribed to the Cloud author was commonplace. Perhaps, however, their circulation was not uniformly limited. This would not be surprising, since the texts are not all equally esoteric, but differ considerably in character and, consequently, in appeal. Cloud, for example, inculcates a particular spiritual discipline; it is directed solely to those who intend a settled contemplative vocation, and unreservedly discourages potential readers who have no such qualification. The Tretyse of þe Stodye of Wysdome, by contrast, is not addressed to a specific recipient; it gives access to one of the seminal texts of contemplative theology in the vernacular, in so impersonal a form as not to exclude anyone pursuing the Christian ideal from putting its doctrine to practical effect in his own life.

The manuscripts seem to give grounds for admitting some such distinction as a possibility. The number of texts which occur in manuscript with Cloud, for example, is remarkably small, and those which are included share, for the most part, the Cloud's special contemplative bias. Summary descriptions of the manuscript contents are included in Prof. Hodgson's editions of the texts: the following is a selective, interpretative account of the material she records.

The seven treatises which make up the Cloud Corpus occur together with no additions in MS Harl. 674. All except Deonise Hid Diuinite appear in the Mount Grace manuscript, Harl. 2373, which also includes (f.12^b) a short piece headed How mans soule is made to be ymage and be lyknes of be Holy Trinite⁴⁴ and closely related to St. Augustine's De Trinitate. The same piece appears in the related Carthusian manuscript Kk.vi.26 (f.26^b), together with the seven Cloud-group texts and an extract from Cloud (chs.63-66), distinct from the complete text which begins on f.49^a, which is headed Howe be my3tes of mans saule stonden in be noumbre of fyfe.⁴⁵ The Carthusian manuscript Douce 262 is clearly a compilation of contemplative texts in the Dionysian tradition: Cloud appears here with the extract from Book III of Hugh of Balma's Viae Syon Lugent, entitled Exposicio super quedam verba libri Beati Dionisij De Mistica Theologia (f.119^a), and the De Septem Gradibus Contemplacionis by Thomas Gallus - one of the many copies of the earliest recension of the text. Privy Counsel (f.139^b) was added c.1520 by the Carthusian scribe Andrew Boorde - also a treatise on repentance beginning "When a solle begynyth to fele grace..." (f.132^b)⁴⁶ and the Directorium Quoddam Breuissimum Mentis in Deum Ad Consequendam Vite Perfectionem (f.134^a) by the Franciscan

Henry Herp (Harphius). The only other substantial volume to contain Cloud is MS li.vi.39: here Cloud (ff.75-118), the text based on Augustine headed in this instance A Sermoun of Seynt Austin how man is maad to be ymage and be liknes of god his makere (ff.118-20), and the Tretyse of be Stodye of Wysdome (ff.120-31) occur consecutively, though they are sandwiched between a collection of standard devotional texts, in which a range of authorities on the spiritual life are represented, which is wide in comparison with other manuscripts incorporating the Cloud. The volume includes works by St. Bernard and Ailred of Rievaulx, for example, and a text of the Scala Claustralium, but was written, it should be remembered, over a long period and in a variety of hands between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Otherwise, the Cloud and Privy Counsel occur unaccompanied in the Parkminster manuscript, and with only *extracts from* Book II of the Scale (^{notably from ch.24}) (f.104) in MS Tr. Coll., Dublin 122. In MS Bodl.576, they occur with two other texts belonging to the Corpus - the Pistle of Preier and Discrescyon of Spirites - and again with a text of Hilton, in this instance, Of The Songe of Aungells (f.155^a). These are all manuscripts connected with Douce 262 and the metropolitan charterhouse. In two other manuscripts, University Coll. 14 (f.56^b) and Royal 17 D V (f.59^a), which are related to the apparently religious manuscripts Harl. 674 and li.vi.39, Cloud occurs in conjunction with St. Catherine of Siena: the text in the Royal manuscript is from the Lyf as printed by de Worde in 1493. St. Catherine's mystical treatise, the Dialogo, owes its introduction to this country to the Carthusians, and was anglicized for the Brigettine nuns of Syon as the Orcherd of Syon in the early fifteenth century: it is from this text that the piece in the University

College manuscript is extracted. This manuscript also contains on f.65^b the Latin Regula Aurea which Dr. Doyle has noted in other manuscripts from contemplative sources - at Sheen, in the possession of the recluse John Dygon, for example. The Royal manuscript contains besides only an untitled fragment in English on f.1^a and various notes and verses in Latin on f.5^a, all apparently on religious themes.

Cloud occurs alone in MSS Royal 17 C XXVI and 17 C XXVII, similarly Privy Counsel in li.vi.31. In MS Harl. 959, the complete text of Cloud is accompanied by separate extracts from chs. 6 and 7 written in the same hand on ff.1^a and 1^b; the manuscript also includes a single leaf of notes from Valerius Maximus, Liber VII, De Quodam Rege (f.2^b) - a compendium of classical commonplaces which was a popular fund of exempla, widely read and copied in the Middle Ages. The seventeenth century manuscript Ff.vi.41 contains only a Calvinistic justification of faith by the transcriber himself in addition to Cloud and Privy Counsel. The manuscripts of the Latin texts of Cloud are in a rather different category, but it is worth noting that the Methley version is accompanied only by the Latin Mirror of Simple Souls in MS Pemb. 221, and in MS Bodl. 856, the second version is preceded beginning at f.1^a with the De Adhaerendo Deo of Johannes von Kastl - a text which is sometimes associated with Cloud in terms of doctrine and language - and followed (f.77^a) by some sermons of Augustine.

The range of texts which occur in manuscript with Cloud, then, is demonstrably small, and restricted, for the most part, to works with particular relevance to the contemplative life. The results of this synopsis of the manuscript contents might, indeed, have been

predicted from consideration of the character of the text and from what may be ascertained concerning the provenance and close connexions of its manuscript copies. The inferences to be drawn from comparing the circulation of Cloud in manuscript with the other texts of the Corpus are, in some respects, equally unsurprising, though nonetheless significant. As a whole, the texts ascribed to the Cloud author form a remarkably cohesive group in manuscript. Privy Counselling - the companion treatise to Cloud - survives in eight manuscripts with Cloud (MSS Harl. 674 and 2373, Park. D 176, Douce 262, Ff.vi.41, Kk.vi.26, Tr.Coll., Dublin 122, Bodl. 576), and never independently of it except alone in MS li.vi.31, which is related to the Douce copy. Deonise Hid Diuinite is similarly linked to Cloud in manuscript: they occur together in the only two extant manuscripts containing the translation (MSS Harl. 674, Kk.vi.26), both of which include transcriptions of the entire Corpus assigned to the Cloud author. The Pistle of Preier is reproduced with Cloud in the same two manuscripts, and also in MSS Harl. 2373 and Bodl. 576: these apart, it appears with other devotional works (The Chastising of God's Children, most of the table and Bk. I of Scale, and a treatise on prayer) in MS Cohen Library, Liverpool University, Ryl. F.4.10 (Harmsworth) and in MS University Library, Cambridge Ff. vi.31. Discrescyon of Spirites is also in the same four manuscripts with Cloud (MSS Harl. 674 and 2373, Kk.vi.26, Bodl. 576), and Discrecioun of Stirings occurs in all of these except the Bodleian manuscript. Both these treatises are included with the Pistle of Preier in MS Ff. vi.31 - in the case of the Discrecioun of Stirings it is the only other identified copy of the work still extant, while Discrescyon of Spirites occurs also in MSS Harl. 993 (a common-profit volume which eventually came into the possession of a nun of Syon)⁴⁷ and Bristol Ref. Library

6.⁴⁸ Ff.vi.31 is an interesting manuscript: it, too, carries a common profit inscription which names the donor as John Colop, and was possibly made up from parts written during his lifetime whilst he was preparing other similar volumes (e.g. Lambeth 472 of works by Hilton). Its exemplars seem to come from the book trade as well as religious houses.⁴⁹ The connexions between MSS Harl. 993 and Ff.vi.31 through John Colop are sketched in footnotes here and explained more fully by Dr.Doyle; they seem to account for the close links between the texts of Discrecyon of Spirites in these two volumes. In general, however, the three treatises of the Cloud group which appear in MS Ff.vi.31 seem to relate most closely to the texts in MS Harl. 674. The manuscript contains in addition various moderate Lollard tracts - some dealing with standard liturgical texts - in defence of popular scriptural knowledge, and a translation of Hugh of St. Victor on coping with temptation (the Latin of which Dr.Doyle has identified only in contemplative religious manuscripts). He also detects the hand of the scribe of MS Bodl. 938 in this volume.⁵⁰

The Tretyse of þe Stodye of Wysdome has, of all the treatises associated with Cloud, easily the most diverse tradition in manuscript. It occurs with Cloud itself in MSS Harl. 674 and 2373, li.vi.39 and Kk.vi.26, and has been identified in seven manuscripts besides. Only a few details concerning these require comment here. Two are apparently Carthusian: MS Ff.vi.33, which also contains A ladder of foure ronges (f.115^a), was probably transcribed by William Darker of Sheen (already mentioned as the scribe of Pemb. 221) for the nuns of Syon, and MS Glasgow University, Hunterian Library 258 (U.4.16) seems to be in the hand of Stephen Dodesham of Sheen. The Stodye of Wysdome

tends to occur in larger volumes, and with an assembly of texts relating to the religious life which is wide in comparison with the contents of the manuscripts in which Cloud appears:⁵¹ MS Westminster School Library, 10 Top. 17, for example, includes Rolle's Form of Living (f.205^a) and part of the Poor Caitiff (f.112^a) among a collection of didactic texts which apply severally to those in various states and degrees of the Church. In MS Harl. 1022, the Stodye of Wysdome again appears with the Form of Living (f.47^a), and also, in this instance, with Bk. I of Scale (f.16^a) and other religious pieces in English and Latin. MS Arundel 286 again comprises a compendium of devotional texts - including, in this case, part of the Revelations of St. Brigit (f.15^b), devout contemplations on the Hours translated from the Speculum Ecclesie (f.129^a) and a treatise on virginity (f.134^b) - many of which are vernacular translations and of particular relevance to a female audience.

III. Concluding remarks on the audience of the Cloud Corpus, and speculations as to the possible provenance of the texts

The Cloud author himself sets a precedent for leaving "som mater ... hanging & not fully declarid þere as it stondeþ" (Cloud 130/8-10), and his seems a good example to follow with regard to drawing further large conclusions from the evidence of the texts in manuscript at this point. There is an apparently strong case for claiming that none of the works grouped as the Cloud Corpus had more than a limited circulation, but that some may possibly have had a broader dissemination than others. Cloud and Privy Counsel are closely allied in manuscript, and Deonise Hid Diuinite, in its rare occurrences, seems to be narrowly associated with them.⁵² The Pistle of Preier and the two treatises on discretion had at least the potential for a wider audience through their printing

and their incidence in common profit volumes - though, in each case, religious manuscripts were used in their compilation and the audience for both the printed and common profit copies may have been predominantly religious. Dr. Doyle relates the manuscripts in which the Stodye of Wysdome appears more closely than Prof. Hodgson would seem to allow; still, it is undoubtedly the most independent text of the Corpus in manuscript, and it tends to occur in the least restrictively contemplative volumes in which the Corpus is represented. In general, there seems to be a natural correlation between the character and appeal of the texts, and what may be inferred from manuscripts concerning the extent of the circulation and the status of their audience.

The evidence of manuscript survival and of printings is, it has already been noted, all too readily liable to misconstruction - more so, perhaps, its obverse, which deals in speculation on the non-appearance of a text in certain contexts. While the following facts seem worth recording here in the attempt to compose a picture of the Cloud's reception by its early readers, therefore, the limitations of such information cannot be overstated. Prof. Helen Gardner, reviewing the E.E.T.S. edition of Cloud in 1947,⁵³ already challenges Prof. Hodgson's opinion as to its popularity. Besides drawing attention to the "marked exclusiveness" of the Cloud Corpus itself in comparison with the works of, say, Rolle and Hilton, she notes that Margaret Deanesly, in her scrutiny of more than 7,500 English wills of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, found no reference to copies of Cloud, though they give ample testimony to the popularity of the other two writers.⁵⁴ She also comments on the oddness of Cloud's absence from the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts if it was immediately and

widely popular, when Bk. I of Scale (which she assumes to have been written later) is incorporated. Dr. Doyle suggests that the Vernon and Simeon volumes were possibly intended for devout noblewomen and read within the household;⁵⁵ they were compiled from many different sources, and include a variety of devotional works ascribed to both Rolle and Hilton - Hilton's Mixed Life, appropriately enough, and the Form of Living. Prof. Gardner's observation seems warranted, yet it requires some qualification. Prof. S.S. Hussey, for example, has commented on the inclusion of only Bk. I of Scale in these collections:

Like the seventeen manuscripts which contain Book I alone, Book II may originally have circulated as a separate work. It is interesting that in most of the manuscripts which have Book II, The Scale occurs alone. Where this is not so, the other contents are either Hilton's or of close interest to a reader of his work. There are no cases where Book II forms part of a really large collection of medieval texts like the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts. This is, however, the case with Book I where several manuscripts are extant. It may be fairly inferred that Book I was better known and more popular than Book II.⁵⁶

Possibly, then, both Book II of Scale and Cloud could have been judged too advanced or specialized for the anticipated audience of these volumes. Perhaps, also, the date of Cloud may have some bearing on its omission from these collections, since the time which elapsed before the two books of Scale circulated jointly may have been a factor in the exclusion of the second book.

Similar considerations of date and applicability to the anticipated audience might have more to do than popularity with the apparent absence of quotation from Cloud in a theological compendium such as the Speculum Spiritualium. This is probably a Carthusian text, compiled c.1400 and intended, as the preface explains, to accommodate material of relevance to both the active and contemplative lives:

Et licet pro contemplativis precipue conscriptus sit liber:
tamen vite active deditus inueniet in eo multa sibi utilia et
precipue in prima parte et secunda ac tertia parte.⁵⁷

It draws on both Rolle and Hilton, but almost entirely in existing Latin versions of the texts. Only the Form of Living is quoted in English, and Hilton is represented in the Latin Fishlake text. Perhaps, then, the author neglected Cloud because it was not available in Latin (the Speculum probably antedates Richard Methley's translation by some 90 years). It is conceivable, however, that the author, if a Carthusian, may have been familiar with Cloud but considered it too advanced or esoteric for inclusion in a manual of this kind. The omission is in any case interesting, both as a possible index of the way the text was regarded by the Carthusians and as eliminating another possible route whereby the substance of the text could have passed into general circulation.

There is, in general, what might be taken as negative evidence of the circulation of the Cloud in the comparative rarity of quotations from or allusions to it outside its own Corpus. It would be rash indeed to regard Margery Kempe as in any sense a norm, but it is interesting, that with her awareness of contemporary devotional literature, she does not give any hint of having known of this text - and particularly so, since it is in the vernacular. On several occasions she lists comparable works which have been read to her:

He red to hir many a good boke of hy contemplacyon & oper bokys,
as þe Bybyl wyth doctowrys þerupon, Seynt Brydys boke, Hyltons
boke, Boneventur, Stimulus Amoris, Incendium Amoris, & swech
oper. (143/25-29)⁵⁸

Her narrative, too, is steeped in transmuted echoes of such works; but

there is nowhere any indication, either specific or implied, that her familiarity with works of "hy contemplacyon" extended to Cloud. Perhaps the text would in any case have been too austere to be congenial to her tastes. Still, it seems possible that she did not know it because it never achieved the popularity which would have assured its currency in her fringe religious circle.

On the other hand, there is good reason to suppose that the Cloud author's work was being read in precisely the kind of devout contexts for which it was intended. Fr. Walsh and Fr. Colledge, in their recently published research into the theological background of the Revelations of Divine Love, have argued for the breadth of Dame Julian's knowledge of vernacular contemplative literature:

her writing, in the long text especially, constantly displays remarkable congruity of both thought and language with contemporary English writings: notably The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God, The Cloud of Unknowing and The Scale of Perfection and their ancillary treatises, and Chaucer's Boethius... she must, early in life, have attracted the benevolent attention of some scholar or scholars who perceived her spiritual and intellectual gifts, and passed on to her the learning of the schools.⁵⁹

Their comments would also suggest that Cloud was being studied and transmitted with due respect for what this thesis has shown to be the very considerable intellectual demands which the text makes of its readers. Interestingly, however, they found little trace of the Deonise Hid Diuinite in Julian's thinking or expression, and the parallels which they cite between the Revelations and the remaining works of the Cloud Corpus, persuade that it was not the negative Dionysian elements of their author's theology which impressed her in his work.

Walter Hilton, too, seems to have known the Cloud author's writings. The Cloud Corpus as a whole has often been assumed to antedate Hilton's work - possibly on the authority of Dom David Knowles, who fixes its composition between 1345 and 1386 in his influential book, The English Mystical Tradition. It now seems more likely that the two authors were near contemporaries and that they acknowledge one another's work in their own. Thus, Prof. Gardner has suggested that the earlier version of Scale I was influenced by Cloud, though the later version and Scale II develop a more mature and independent theology,⁶⁰ and Fr. Colledge speculates that the Cloud author may have Hilton's "Epistola... ad quedam solitarii de leccione, intencione, oracione et alliis" (MS Royal 6 E III) in mind when he refers to "anoþer book of anoþer mans werk" (Cloud 71/15) in chs. 35 and 48 of Cloud.⁶¹ A note to ch. 48 in the margin of MS University College, Oxford 14 does in fact identify the unnamed work as "hylton's". Indeed, it is sometimes tempting to envisage a kind of dialogue between them, taking place obliquely in the works which they wrote for others. The short epistle, Of Angels' Song, for example, was clearly not conceived as a critique of Cloud, but it contains much that reads like a direct response to Hilton's study of the text. (The manner of its brief allusions suggests that Hilton's is the later work). The Cloud author's warnings that the very inexperience of the novice in contemplation might be his downfall, for instance, meet with Hilton's unreserved approbation, and the cautionary tone of Cloud ch. 52 is reproduced in Of Angels' Song:

Sum man when he has long traueled bodili and gastli in destroyng of syns and getyng of uertus, and perauenture has getyn be grace a sumdele rest, and a clerte in conscience, anon he leues prayers, redyngs of haly wryt, and meditacions of þe passion of Crist, and þe mynde of his wrechednes; and, or he be called of God, he gadres his wittis be uiolence to sekyn and to byhalde heuenly thyngs, or his egh be mad gastly be grace, and ouertrauels by ymaginacioun

his wittis, and be undiscrete trauelyng turnes þe braynes in his heued, and forbrekis þe myghtis and þe wittis of þe saule and of body; and þan, for febilnes of þe brayne, him think þat he heres wonderful sownes and sangs; and þat is nathyng els bot a fantasy, caused o trublyng of þe brayn... (13/114-25)⁶²

By contrast, there is a strong sense that if Hilton does not thoroughly disapprove of the Cloud author's advocacy of the way of unknowing, he at least regards it with some suspicion and with considerable misgivings as to its possible effect. He ends Of Angels' Song with this admonition:

For wyt þou wele þat a naked mynde or a nakid ymaginacioun of Iesu or of any gastly þing, withoutyn swetnes of luf in þe affeccioun, or withoutyn light of knowyng in resoun, it es bot a blyndnes, and a way to dissayte, if a man hald it in his awen syght mare þan it es. þarfore I hald it syker þat he be mek in his awen felyng, and hald þis mynde in regard nocht, til he may, be custum and oysyng of þis mynde, fele þe fere of luf in his affeccioun, and þe lyght of knawyng in his resoun. (15/183-190)

The discrepancies in the two authors' accounts of unitive knowledge will be considered below.⁶³ It is notable here, however, that Hilton writes with a vehemence which suggests an imagined adversary, and seems to use the Cloud author's distinctions and terminology to argue the opposing view. Perhaps there is rather tart irony in Hilton's recollection of the Cloud author's metaphorical vocabulary, when he says that to have a "naked" apprehension of spiritual realities, which relies on neither of the accepted faculties of perception, is to be "blind" indeed.

Evidence such as this, then, indicates not only where and by whom the Cloud was read, but also suggests something of the response which it provoked. Equally, while Carthusian interest in the text has already been established from manuscript survivals, the use of it by Carthusian authors is a particularly valuable index of attitudes

to it within the order. There is the evidence of Methley's Latin text which, late though it is, is a testimony to the status of the text and the desire to overcome its provincial limitations, possibly to make it accessible to continental branches of the order, by putting it into the lingua franca of theology. The Carthusian compilation Of Actyfe Lyfe & Contemplatyfe Declaracion is also particularly interesting in this respect. It appears in two fifteenth century manuscripts: B.M. Add. 37049 (ff.87b-89b) and, in a longer version entitled Via ad Contemplacionem, B.M. Add. 37790 (ff.234a-236a). Both are Carthusian volumes, and 37049 seems likely to be a product of one of the Northern charterhouses.⁶⁴ The texts in question are edited and discussed by P.S. Jolliffe in his article, "Two Middle English Tracts on the Contemplative Life".⁶⁵ Both deal with the three principal phases of the contemplative way - purgative, illuminative and unitive - though the version in MS Add. 37049, which seems to depend on some form of the text in MS Add. 37790, is modified and extended to consider them in the broader context of Christian living. The structuring of the tracts around the three degrees of contemplation is adopted from Hugh of Balma's Viae Syon Lugent, and this, too, is the major single source for the compiler's textual borrowings. The Balma material is coupled, in the shorter version, with quotations from the Cloud Corpus and from Hilton's Scale; the longer text draws less on the Viae Syon Lugent, but supplements the material from English contemplative literature with recollections, in particular, of the Tretyse of be Stodye of Wysdome and Rolle's Form of Living.⁶⁶

As compilations, these are interesting and in some respects puzzling. Jolliffe has recognized that their significance consists,

not least, in their having borrowed from the Cloud Corpus:

Compared with the Scale and the more popular writings by Rolle, the Cloud and its associated epistles occur in few extant manuscripts. Whereas extracts by Hilton and Rolle have been copied to stand independently or in combination with other material, there is only one other instance yet identified of material from the Cloud having been borrowed; and that, occurring in a Cloud manuscript and being little more than an extract isolated for instruction on one topic, is less significant than these tracts.⁶⁷

They are equally important, he stresses, as evidence that Hugh of Balma was being read by English Carthusians during the fifteenth century - and not only read, but studied in conjunction with the Cloud of Unknowing. Jolliffe recalls Fr. Walsh's inference that Richard Methley shows knowledge of the Viae Syon Lugent in his Latin text of Cloud, and notes the appearance of an extract from Balma's work in the Carthusian MS Douce 262 which also incorporates Cloud and Privy Counsel.⁶⁸ This need not mean, of course, as Jolliffe cautiously advises, that the Cloud author himself drew on the Viae Syon Lugent. But this apparently consistent link between the two works in Carthusian circles, though it may only be authenticated from fifteenth century sources, suggests at least that the Carthusians recognized the Cloud's affiliations with Hugh's development of the Dionysian mystical tradition (the intermediary influence of Gallus, it will be remembered, is also represented in MS Douce 262 by the De Septem Gradibus Contemplacionis), and perhaps even goes some way to corroborating the textual evidence of Cloud's affinities with Hugh, insofar as the Carthusian connexion intimates the kind of possible theological/literary milieu in which the author might have encountered the Viae Syon Lugent.

The puzzling aspect of the tracts, however, is the compilers' method of selecting and combining material from the various sources.

The principal debt to Hugh, as Jolliffe notes, is in the description of the purgative way. The account of the illuminative way owes little to the Viae Syon Lugent, and that of the unitive way still less, and Jolliffe concludes,

While it is true, therefore, that both tracts describe the contemplative life in terms of the threefold way which the Mystica Theologia helped to popularise and used words partly borrowed from that treatise, there is little evidence to establish that the compilers depended on it for their teaching. Significantly they borrowed most from it to describe the purgative way, which it treats least distinctively and to which it devotes least attention.⁶⁹

Where the Cloud author and Hugh agree in their definition of the unitive way, the compilers opt for the account which occurs in the English text. The distinctive common elements in the unitive theology of Hugh and the Cloud author - the concepts of loving aspirations and of knowledge through unknowing - are, in fact, conspicuously underplayed in these compilations, and the Cloud author's theory of contemplation is represented without specific allusion either to unknowing or to the cloud metaphor, which are not only its most salient characteristics, but are essential to its meaning. The section on the unitive way also includes material from the Scale - Jolliffe comments, "the specific teaching about loving aspirations associated with the Mystica Theologia and the Cloud occur in words borrowed from the Scale."⁷⁰ He infers from this,

Although it would be unwise to draw from this any conclusion as to the relationship between the Scale and the Cloud epistles, particularly as these sources, like the Mystica Theologia, appear to have been used to express the compilers' teaching rather than to determine it, nevertheless it suggests that there may have been a fairly settled tradition of teaching on the contemplative life to which both writers were seen by their successors and admirers to have contributed.⁷¹

Jolliffe's point is an important one. But it surely raises the question of the extent to which these compilers, at least, regarded the substance

of their sources as mutually compatible. Some peculiarities in their application of the Cloud author's unitive theology have already been suggested. It is equally curious that statements such as the following - which appears in both versions of the tract and is fundamental to the theory of negative mysticism -

Therefore lyfte vp they herte vnto god with a meke sterynge/ of luf. and mene hym selfe. And þerto luke/ þat the lothe for to thynke on ozt bot on hymselfe. so þat/ nozt worke in thy witte nor in thy wylle bot only hym selfe (107/239-42),

are aligned with expressions of Hilton's Christocentric concept of contemplation -

For contemplacion is nouzt ellys bot a sight of Ihesu the whylke is verrey pees (101-102/183-4) -

without acknowledgment on the part of the compilers that they intend different orders of experience or that the passages which they quote, in their original contexts, pertain to distinct and in some respects antithetical schemes of contemplation. Indeed, though the compilations are organized around Hugh of Balma's divisions of the contemplative way and draw on the Cloud Corpus, they are not intrinsically Dionysian works, but advocate a Christocentric form of devotion with special reverence for the Holy Name.

Clearly, however, the works of the Cloud author and Hugh of Balma were integral to the thinking of the compiler of the earlier and shorter text, at least, of the Of Actyfe Lyfe & Contemplatyfe Declaracion on contemplation. This is the version which occurs in MS Add. 37790, and it is completely at home there. The manuscript is described by Walsh and Colledge in their edition of the shorter

text of Julian as,

... an anthology of less popular spiritual writings which comprises the unique copies of Julian's short text and of the English Ruysbroek Treatise of Perfection.⁷²

They detect evidence of "connoisseurship" in its composition, suggest that it was a commissioned manuscript, and note that, while it was written in a single hand of the mid fifteenth century, numerous hands were at work throughout correcting errors.⁷³ Fr. Colledge has previously written, in his article on the Treatise of Perfection, that,

It would seem that the scribe of MS Add. 37790 (or of its archetype) has been anxious to assemble an anthology of notable English translations of mystical treatises, both Latin works written in England, such as the Incendium Amoris, and works written by foreign authors,⁷⁴

and the Carthusian compiler is characterized in the introduction to the Revelations as "an editor with an eye for the rarities in the literature of contemplation".⁷⁵ On all these counts, the inclusion of a text extant itself in only two Carthusian manuscripts and incorporating material from works as limited in their circulation as Cloud and the Viae Syon Iugent, does not seem surprising. The later expanded version, which occurs in the less specialized volume, MS Add. 37049, is also the one which deals more broadly with the Christian life; it even includes simple verse couplets on the distinctions between the active and contemplative vocations.

This brief review of the kind of evidence which survives to suggest the reception of Cloud during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries tends, therefore, to the conclusion that the text was not widely and generally known, but was for the most part studied and respected in the sort of narrowly religious contexts to which its

content is appropriate and of which its author would assuredly have approved. One inescapable feature of the discussion so far has been the prominence of the Carthusians, not only as transmitters of the text, but as guardians and, in some cases, exponents of the tradition of Dionysian mystical theology with which the Cloud is so closely allied. So many and various are the text's links with the order, indeed, that the question becomes unavoidable - was the Cloud simply one of the works which the Carthusians naturally cherished for its teaching on contemplation, or was it also in fact written by a member of the order?

There is good cause to be relieved that this question need be broached here only in the context of an afterword. The issue of authorship remains as contentious as ever, despite the fact that it has been the focus of so much literature on the subject of the Cloud. Many valuable observations have been recorded in the course of this debate, but it is perhaps regrettable that the discussion has so often become entrenched in inconclusive reappraisals of the textual evidence for and against Hilton's possible authorship of the Cloud Corpus. The recent article by Wolfgang Riehle, "The Problem of Walter Hilton's Possible Authorship of The Cloud of Unknowing and its Related Tracts",⁷⁶ is particularly disappointing in this respect, since it makes so little capital out of recent research into cognate issues with possible significance for this question, but instead mainly rehearses the now overworked internal arguments which revolve round style, terminology, and the concept of the mystical night. Perhaps, then, the study of the precise theological background of the Cloud may be proposed as a more secure basis on which to hazard speculations as to its possible authorship.

There are, it should be acknowledged, a number of instances of the Carthusians acting as patrons to texts not composed within the order in circumstances which admit close comparison with their treatment of Cloud. It is now accepted that the English charterhouses preserved close ties with their continental counterparts, and that the links with the Low Countries - especially through Syon and Sheen - were particularly strong. Fr. Colledge has shown that Ruysbroek's works were introduced to this country through these channels, and that the translated texts of Ruysbroek, the Chastising of God's Children and Treatise of Perfection circulated in the English charterhouses. Dr. Roger Lovatt has argued that Bk. I at least of the Imitation of Christ was imported by the Carthusians - it was transcribed by John Dygon, the fifth recluse of Sheen, in 1438 - and that the longer text probably reached England in the same way and was likewise translated at Sheen.⁷⁷ Dr. Lovatt suggests that the Carthusians may also have introduced the De Adhaerendo Deo to this country: it survives in two manuscripts, the one certainly Carthusian (MS Bodleian Lat. th. d. 27, from Coventry Charterhouse) and the other probably so (MS Bodley 856). Similar examples are the Mirror of Simple Souls and the works of Catherine of Siena.⁷⁸ The relevant common denominator in these cases is that all are texts which moved primarily within the order. Cloud, though a native text, seems to have been treated in much the same way: Hilton and Rolle, on the other hand - whether as a natural consequence of their broader appeal or by design - were not engrossed by the Carthusians to quite the same extent, although their works were certainly appreciated and much copied among the order. Dr. Doyle has already commented on the similarities between Cloud and the Mirror in terms of the restrictions imposed on their circulation by the difficulties of their

teaching and the expressed intention of their authors, as well as in respect of their limited transmission in manuscript.⁷⁹

The evidence of circulation, then, is inconclusive as regards the possible Carthusian authorship of the text. It is equally difficult to support the case for authorship as against patronage on the grounds of the order's role in developing the Dionysian tradition of mystical theology. In 1923, a monk of Parkminster Charterhouse wrote a monograph on the Cloud which lists its exposition of Dionysian principles as one of the arguments against ascribing it to a Carthusian author.⁸⁰ His claim that the order traditionally allied itself with the alternative school of devotional mysticism, through imitation of Christ, is now patently untenable⁸¹ - though it is true that a strong tradition of this kind of piety flourished within the order. Indeed, it is possible that the Cloud was not universally popular in the English charterhouses. If this were the case, it would not be without parallels. Dr. Lovatt has established that the readership for the Imitatio, for example, was probably small even by Carthusian standards:

... its circulation in England was restricted to a small, conservative and spiritual elite. The Carthusians and the Bridgettines represented a collective elite of this sort, but, even amongst the members of these two orders, the individuals familiar with the Imitatio were distinguished for their learning and piety.⁸²

Dr. Lovatt identifies Dygon as such a reader, and notes that the influence of the text, as a result, seems to have been slight. The implications of this observation may perhaps be of interest for Cloud, since the text is characterized and distinguished by its exposition of negative theology, yet its impact in this area - if it may be quantified from the extent to which it is mirrored in the works of other authors,

and even allowing that the literary groups within the Carthusian order were in a minority - seems to have been narrow.⁸³

But clearly, the evidence assembled here must obviate any doubt that the Dionysian tradition persisted in some sections at least of the English order,⁸⁴ and that the Cloud's affinities with this tradition were recognized in Carthusian circles. Perhaps, indeed, the special regard in which the Cloud seems to have been held within the order has to do with the very fact of its Dionysian bias. Possibly one could go further, and say that what is known of the attitudes to Dionysian theology in the English branch of the Carthusian order tends to confirm rather than exclude its members as likely contenders for the authorship of the text. There is, for example, the approval of the Dionysian style and content of Ruysbroek's contemplative works in the Confirmacio Ordinis Carthusiensis, which claims, albeit wrongly, that their author belongs to the Carthusian Order and commends his writings to those who are committed to the life of contemplation - those, as Fr. Colledge puts it succinctly in his article on the Treatise of Perfection, who are,

... such instructed students and contemplatives as the Carthusians themselves, who might be expected to have passed beyond that which is merely popular in their devotional readings.⁸⁵

The Cloud would certainly have been appropriate to much the same kind of audience, and Fr. Colledge in fact suggests, in the edition of the Chastising which he published with Joyce Bazire, that it was precisely because Cloud excelled others which drew on the same theological background and were similarly directed to those advanced in the contemplative life, that texts such as the Treatise of Perfection were neglected - even by the prolific Carthusian commentator James Grenehalgh.⁸⁶

Colledge and Bazire also draw attention to the manner of the Cloud author's adaptation of Hugh of St. Victor's indictment of the extravagant behaviour of misguided novices in the De Institutione, which, in Cloud ch. 53, is contrived rather to express condemnation of the self-indulgent excesses of false contemplatives: this they see as exemplifying contemporary fears, especially prevalent among Carthusians, that this kind of ostentatious 'enthusiasm' in contemplative sects might lead to heresy. Walter Baier has also noted the stand taken by the order as a whole on this issue -

1369 erläßt das Generalkapitel der Kartäuser die Anweisung, die Mönche sollten sich fernhalten von den Begarden, Kokarden, Fraticellen und Beginen⁸⁷ -

and Colledge and Bazire confirm that one sector at least of the Carthusian community in England voiced urgent concern with the potential dangers of 'enthusiasm':

... although some of the English Carthusians, such as Methley and Norton, are known to have been great 'enthusiasts', the opposing point of view, discouraging and deploring extravagance and singularity in the spiritual life, was well represented in the order. Whether the author of The Chastising was himself a Carthusian or not, there is much evidence to show that it was possibly through Carthusian means that Ruysbroek's writings came to England; and it is clear that the author, who uses so much of The Spiritual Espousals, which is so specially commended in the Carthusian Confirmacio, also shares the point of view expressed here on enthusiasm.⁸⁸

Methley himself reinforces the text's wariness of heretical sects in the prologue to his translation of Cloud: "Et hoc' contra heresim begardorum" (MS Pemb. 221 f. 1b). Colledge and Bazire also compare an anonymous tract in MS Christ's College, Cambridge DD.1.11 - owned by Coventry Charterhouse and possibly written for the use of Carthusians - entitled 'Vt inclusi non querant signa et mirabilia fieri nichil,

quia per ostentacionem faciant et vanam gloriam omnino fugiant'. It seems, too, from the reply which the hermit Thomas Bassett made to an unidentified Carthusian correspondent, printed in part by H.E. Allen as the 'Defence against the Detractors of Richard', that the unknown monk may have been among those of his order who were nervous of the devotional extravagances which, in this instance, are imputed to the influence of Rolle.⁸⁹

The Cloud, then, could well have been produced in such a context. The possibility perhaps becomes a likelihood in the light of the analysis of the precise theological and linguistic background of the text which has occupied this thesis. It has been submitted that the Cloud is essentially a Dionysian work which continues the tradition of negative mystical theology as it was fostered and developed in the continental charterhouses, and which has, moreover, particular affinities with Hugh of Balma's Viae Syon Lugent. This proposition may now be assessed with other complementary circumstances: the fact that the text was circulated in manuscript principally by the Carthusians; that it stands apart from other original contemplative works written in the vernacular during the fourteenth century insofar as it expounds a theology which, in this country, was primarily associated with the Carthusians; the coincidence of its author's attitude to 'enthusiasm' and the concern being expressed on this point in some circles of the English order. It seems, therefore, that the Carthusian order is the most likely milieu in which the Cloud author might have been exposed to Dionysian theology and nurtured the personal commitment to the negative way of contemplation which inspired his writing.⁹⁰ More importantly, perhaps, it is difficult to envisage another

environment in which the author might have acquired not merely an impressively wide knowledge of devotional literature, but have become thoroughly familiar with works of Dionysian theology - notably the Viae Syon Lugent - which all available evidence suggests were largely confined to the charterhouses, unless he was himself a Carthusian or at least had the closest contact with the order involving some form of access to its library. The four extant manuscripts which contain the whole or parts of Balma's work, it will be remembered, are all apparently Carthusian: MSS Add. 37790, 37049 and Douce 262 have already been considered; the fourth is MS Douai 396, written by J. London of Sheen and once thought by Michael Sargent to have been annotated by Grenehalgh, though he has since revised his opinion on this point.⁹¹

The possibility of Carthusian authorship for the Cloud has been mooted before and has been challenged on a variety of grounds. While a particularized response to the many counter-arguments is impracticable in the present context, the case against Carthusian authorship has rested in the past on certain objections - notably its use of the vernacular and lack of reference to the Carthusian rule - which recent research has shown to be untenable. It is perhaps judicious, then, to anticipate a priori opposition to the revival of the theory by commenting on some of these points.

The fact that Latin was and is the official language of the Carthusians is among the obstacles to assigning Cloud to one of the order which are listed by the Parkminster monk. In practice, however, there seems to have been much more flexibility and regard for individual

circumstances in the medieval Carthusian's choice between Latin and the vernacular than this simple statement of principle seems to admit. The question has been considered in some detail by Fr. Colledge in connexion with his work on the Ruysbroek translations. The introduction to the Colledge and Bazire edition of the Chastising establishes that the order was careful to preserve standards of Latinity and preferred the office to be said in Latin, even if it were not perfectly understood by the participants.⁹² Latin seems to have been regarded almost with veneration as an intrinsically sacred language, having "a virtue, power, strength which the vernacular lacked",⁹³ and its importance as the only international language of scholarship was undoubtedly respected. On the other hand, there is a body of evidence which testifies to the order's concern with the education of those whose knowledge of Latin was inadequate: this ranges from the provision made in various vernacular manuals of instruction for the lay-brothers, whose lack of Latin was, in many cases, complemented by a generally low level of education, to translations of advanced devotional works of the kind already mentioned, some of which were apparently intended for female religious communities such as Syon and Barking Abbey, where the standard of education though not of Latinity was outstandingly high. Fr. Colledge has put the situation concisely in a recent article:

The more evidence we acquire, the more apparent does it become that throughout the fifteenth century and until the Dissolution, the forces in England most active in introducing into the country modern works of spiritual guidance, in translating them into the vernacular, and in reversing the process so as to make known abroad insular spiritual writings, were the Carthusians, and that in this they were helped by the regular interchange of visits with their brethren in the Low Countries. To take only two, but outstanding examples, we now know with certainty that had it not been for them, John Ruysbroek's Espousals and his Treatise of Perfection, and Walter Hilton's Scale would not have become known overseas in the way which has been shown.⁹⁴

This means, in the case of Cloud, that the fact that a Carthusian, in the late fifteenth century, translated the text into Latin, need not of itself preclude the text's having been originally written, in English, by a member of the same order during the late fourteenth century. Considerations of date and the status of English have in this instance no material bearing on the situation: the Carthusian prior, Nicholas Love, compiled his English Mirror in the early fifteenth century, while his fellow Carthusians John Norton and Methley wrote predominantly in Latin as late as the end of the century. Methley, in fact, though the translator of two substantial vernacular texts and the author of various Latin works describing his own religious experiences which were read within his order, is also known to have written in English where the occasion demanded it: his letter of advice to the hermit Hugh, printed by James Hogg as To Hew Heremyte. A Fystyl of Solytary Lyfe Nowadayes,⁹⁵ uses the vernacular and glosses essential Latin quotations in an effort to circumvent its recipient's near ignorance of Latin. His method and motive are clearly akin to those of the Cloud author, and these seem to have been key factors in determining the choice of language by Carthusian writers. It is thus entirely possible that one Carthusian might have opted for the vernacular in accordance with the needs of the intended recipient of his work, while in changed circumstances, once the same text had acquired a certain prestige within the order, a later Carthusian might have put it into Latin in order to open it to a wider, perhaps international audience.

The question of the Cloud's original recipient, of course, looms large in all this, and this is in turn connected with the second bar to Carthusian authorship to be singled out above - namely, the absence

of textual references to the Carthusian rule. The principal objection to this objection must be that it does not necessarily follow from the supposition that the author was himself a Carthusian that he wrote in the first instance for his own order. Certainly, there was an audience for vernacular works within the order, particularly among its lay-members: Dr. Doyle comments on this point,

The presence in each Charterhouse of a body of lay-brethren, separated from the choir-monks in duties and quarters, and supposedly in education, which was previously a characteristic of other orders such as the Cistercians and Gilbertines, may have given an excuse for the introduction of English literature to the communities, though the use of the vernacular was traditionally discouraged and literacy denied to these labourers, but whether the letter of the law was kept or not, the lay-brethren listening or reading for themselves accordingly, the latinate choir-monks were not backward in cultivating the study of the same works, justifiably in view of the innate and increasing preferability of the native tongue for all devotional purposes.⁹⁶

The situation which Dr. Doyle describes here is one possible way of accounting for the vernacular composition of Cloud and its subsequent inclusion in the contemplative literature which was valued among the full members of the order. It has already been observed that the allusion to the state of the disciple in the first chapter of Cloud -

& þerfore he kyndelid þi desire ful graciously, & fastnid bi it a lyame of longing, & led þee bi it into a more special state & forme of leuyng, to be a seruaunt of þe special seruautes of his (14/3-5) -

seems to refer to some kind of regular existence or "binding by vow to a stable form of life",⁹⁷ and that the description "a seruaunt of þe special seruautes of his" seems particularly apt for the lay-brothers of the Carthusian order.⁹⁸ Richard Methley, indeed, in his notes on the classification of the three phases of the disciple's progress in the spiritual life which the Cloud author incorporates in this chapter - from "þe comoun degree of leuyng" (14/7-8), that is, to "a more special

state & forme of leuyng" (14/4-5), and at last to "þe þrid degre & maner of leuing, þe whiche hiȝt synguleer" (14/11-12) - compares the first state with that of laymen, the second with that of religious and the clergy, and the third with solitaries and Carthusians.⁹⁹ Prof. Gardner has properly pointed out that Methley's comments might well have been prompted by "a natural loyalty to his order",¹⁰⁰ and that the inference throughout that the disciple's time is entirely his own, and the reference to his "house" (Cloud 23/15), reminiscent of Hilton's application of the word to a recluse's dwelling in Scale I, ch. 1, suggest that the disciple led a solitary rather than a communal life. Against this, Beatrice White observes that "house" could equally refer to the "domus" of a Carthusian,¹⁰¹ and it is confirmed in the introduction to the Colledge and Bazire edition of the Chastising that, at least when Methley and Norton were writing, the Carthusians regarded themselves as modern hermits.¹⁰² Fr. Colledge has also compared the passage in ch. 1 of Cloud and Methley's annotations with what Hugh of Balma says of the Carthusian vocation in the Viae Syon Lugent:

'Qui ipsum non ad regulam beati Benedicti vel Augustini redemptoris gratia provocavit, sed ad illam beatissimam quam ipsemet eligit quando ductus est in desertum'.¹⁰³

Clearly, then, there are allusions in the text which a partisan commentator such as Methley could, not unreasonably, interpret with reference to the Carthusian order, and potential recipients of the text in its original form could be found within the Carthusian framework. The Cloud author himself repeatedly reminds the disciple that he is in a specially privileged position, and that it is therefore incumbent on him to achieve much spiritually (e.g. Cloud 13/18-14/15, 14/20-15/9). Colledge and Bazire's comment on the Chastising - written, they suggest,

for the nuns of Barking Abbey - that it,

... nowhere exhorts its readers to embrace the religious profession: it is written for those who are already professed, and the matter requires no further discussion,¹⁰⁴ -

may equally apply to Cloud, and the author's lack of reference to the routines of Carthusian life may warrant no further explanation than that his overriding concern, in this instance, was with the inner life and the individual soul's progress to union with God.¹⁰⁵

On the other hand, the Carthusians are known to have addressed their works as often as not to readers outside their order, and there are grounds for looking to other contexts for the earliest audience of Cloud. Indeed, one of the interesting points to emerge from the present study of the Cloud's theological background and its use of language has been a strong impression of the kind of reader envisaged by the author, which is derived from the provision he clearly makes for the reader's accomplishments and limitations. It seems certain, therefore, both from the high proportion of translated works in his extant Corpus and the practices which he adopted as a translator, that he anticipated the recipients of his works - and there is no reason to suppose that they were all directed to the same disciple¹⁰⁶ - to have no Latin education or at best a rudimentary knowledge of the language. At the same time, however, the earliest reader of the three texts which have been most under discussion here - Cloud, Privy Counsel and Deonise Hid Diuinite - who was presumably one and the same,¹⁰⁷ is expected not only to be considerably advanced in contemplation, but to have an intellect strenuous and flexible enough to match the demands of his theology, and possibly some appreciation of the complex doctrinal issues being broached

by the author in, for example, his account of mystic union and the unitive way. It remains to determine a context in which a reader with these qualifications is likely to be found.

It seems, in general, unlikely that a Carthusian lay-brother would have these accomplishments - even allowing that the standard was in some cases high, since the order seems to have attracted more than could be accommodated as choir-brethren in the small number of English charter-houses. It is perhaps easier to suit the circumstances of the text with its first recipient's being a novice of the order about to enter into full membership, or possibly a monk having lately progressed from the novitiate. The author's role as spiritual director to a young man committed to a life of contemplation but still at the threshold of its highest reaches - the disciple, he tells us, is twenty-four (Cloud 20/19) - would be consistent with such a situation. The disciple's comparative ignorance of Latin would, however, be slightly disturbing if this were the case. Colledge and Bazire have stated as a principle,

... a boy who showed inclination or was intended for a religious vocation would whilst still at school receive sufficient instruction in Latin to enable him to satisfy the variable and often very accomodating examination standards of those to whom he would present himself for ordination or religious profession.¹⁰⁸

Standards of Latin, therefore, might vary considerably among those who might be expected to show some proficiency in the language. Further, it is difficult to estimate the degree of education which might be expected of a specifically Carthusian novice. Walter Baier has recently remarked that Carthusian novices do not seem to have been put through a uniform set programme of theological instruction:

Die jungen Kartäuser gingen in MA durch keine theologischen

Ordenschulen und wurden durch kein einheitliches Novität geprägt.¹⁰⁹

Moreover, James Hogg's volume of Carthusian miscellanea includes a document relating to the admission of a novice which is written in English: he comments,

one is somewhat surprised at the use of the vernacular, though this was perhaps employed to make quite certain that the postulant - and later the novice - fully understood the seriousness of the obligations he was taking on himself.¹¹⁰

It is an interesting example, since a prospective novice whose Latin was inadequate to the understanding of his vows might, at a later stage, achieve a spiritual maturity which outstripped his level of Latinity, so that he could appreciate the complexities of Dionysian literature in the vernacular though they might elude him in Latin.¹¹¹

There are, however, two other categories of recipient for the text outside the Carthusian order for whom the Carthusians are otherwise known to have written. Richard Methley's letter to Hugh, for example, is a ready instance of a Carthusian's acting as correspondent and director to a hermit. Both Methley and the Cloud author are, indeed, gifted as spiritual directors, though they differ widely in temperament, and Methley's epistle is much shorter than Cloud and his instruction both more personal and elementary.¹¹² The theory that the recipient of Cloud was vowed to solitude but not bound by a monastic rule might not only account for the text's lack of reference to the regular life and concern with provision for the disciple's physical welfare, but also answer to the Cloud author's expectations of his reader. The other possibility is that it was written for a female audience. The combination of a high level of education in the broad sense and commitment to the contemplative life with a low

standard of Latinity is most consistently to be found among female religious. Colledge and Bazire go on to contrast the normal circumstances of a boy's education, as described in the passage quoted above, with the education a girl might expect to receive:

no such instruction was given to girls and no such requirements were made of them when they sought admission to religion. In the Middle Ages, women who knew Latin were rare, although perhaps in our period rarer in England than the Low Countries and Germany... and we can observe how unnatural female Latinity appeared by the frequency with which pious biographers inform us, as they do, for example, of St. Hildegard and St. Bridget, that such women only learned Latin by supernatural means...

Such lack of Latin in a nun was no stigma, any more than was illiteracy in a well-born layman or his womenfolk.

Communities such as Syon - established too late, of course, to have had any connexion with the Cloud author - and, earlier, the Dominican Priory of Dartford and Benedictine foundation of Barking Abbey, are known to have generated considerable demand for original works of devotion in the vernacular and for Latin works, often of quite advanced theology, in translation.¹¹³

Whether or not the Cloud author wrote in the first instance for one in such a community or perhaps for a female recluse, it seems certain that he appreciated the value of his work in these circles and anticipated their needs in its composition. It is clear that he expected Cloud itself to be passed on by its original recipient,¹¹⁴ and several specific, even pointed allusions suggest that he envisaged that his larger audience would include women:

A 3ong man or a womman, newe set to þe scole of deuocion... (Cloud 85/15-16)
þe whiche man or womman (wheþer þat it be) felep hym sterid þorow
grace & bi counsel to forsake alle outward besines, & for to sette
hym fully for to lyue contemplatyue liif... (Cloud 49/1-3)
... man or womman þat leueþ in þis liif... (Cloud 100/8).

It is, indeed, possible that he avoided allusions to a particular monastic rule in order not to restrict the circulation of the text artificially more than its subject dictated. Perhaps, too, his usual form of address for the disciple, "Goostly freende in God" (e.g. Cloud 13/1 & 8, P.C. 135/1, P.P. 48/1), is deliberately ambiguous to allow for potential readers of either sex.

Colledge and Bazire have some interesting comparisons to make in this connexion between one text of the Cloud Corpus, the Deonise Hid Diuinite, and the English version of the De Perfectione Filiorum Dei. The translator of the Treatise of Perfection, they note, claims that he undertook the work in order to improve his understanding of the text, yet,

... there apparently were those who thought that his work might be of profit to other students of the mystics: the text in Add. 37790 is obviously removed, by how many stages we cannot conjecture, from the translator's autograph. The probability is that The Treatise was copied for the benefit of much the same type of student as would use, for example, the English translation of the Mystica Theologia itself, Denis Hid Divinity, persons advanced in contemplation yet with inadequate or no Latin. Early in the fifteenth century we find, in Julian of Norwich, such a one: capable of the most refined speculation, and, it seems, versed in mystical literature, she none the less was Latinless if not illiterate. To such as she, Jordaen's Latin was as useless as Ruysbroek's own Dutch: yet such persons would have listened with comprehension to the English translation of this abstruse and recondite text.¹¹⁵

The comparison with the Treatise is particularly apt, since its affinities with Cloud are closer than those of the Chastising, insofar as it too is essentially a Dionysian work and intended for those who are already advanced in contemplation.¹¹⁶ It provides interesting parallels with the Deonise Hid Diuinite, moreover, in the handling of the complexities of Dionysian theology and vocabulary in the native idiom. It is also notable, in view of the Carthusian connexions of

the Ruysbroek translation and the apparently narrow circulation of the Deonise Hid Diuinite, that the Treatise of Perfection possibly contains a rare allusion to the Cloud author's Dionysian translation:

for lyke as the derknessys of god be comforth with alle lyztes,
and thay be hyd from alle knowlleges, aftyr the sayinge of saynt
dyonyse, so is hid vnto vs þe self dyuynyte...¹¹⁷

The possibility that the Cloud author may have contrived to give female readers access to his work by addressing it, non-committally, to a "Goostly freende in God", has already been advocated by Wolfgang Riehle as a corollary to his study of the metaphorical language of fourteenth century English contemplative literature. He calls attention, by way of comparison, to a letter which occurs in MS Harleian 2406, ff. 50-68b¹¹⁸: it opens "My dere frende", and is clearly addressed to a woman, though both she and the author are anonymous. The text reports and relays a letter of spiritual guidance which the author has received from Walter Hilton. The recipient is apparently not cloistered, but seems to be free to follow her conscience in the conduct of her daily life. Riehle endorses Fr. Colledge's research, which has demonstrated that with the growth in the numbers of female nuns and solitaries, demand for books of instruction in the vernacular increased and was generously supplied by the Carthusians. He speculates, however, that the letter in Harl. 2406 was intended for, "eine laikaler Leserin..., die vielleicht ein nur klosterähnliches Leben führte".¹¹⁹ There may have been, he suggests, groups of such lay-women in England during the fourteenth century, living communally in the manner of the Beguines. He interprets the Cloud author's vehemence towards religious enthusiasm - which has been considered above¹²⁰ as a reaction against the excesses of a Free Spirit movement established in this country, but contends that both he

and Hilton urge true "freedom of spirit" in their writings. His observations and hypotheses lead him to draw the following conclusions about the circumstances in which the Cloud author might have written:

Obwohl wir fast nichts über sein Person wissen, so geht doch aus seinen Werken hervor, daß er einen Schülerkreis gegründet hat und daß er mit diesem in regem, mündlichen und schriftlichen Gedankenaustausch stand, zu welchem Zweck er auch seine erhaltenen Schriften dienen auch dieses Verhältnis von Autor und Publikum erinnert etwas an die Situation auf dem Kontinent. Denn in Deutschland gab es eine hauptsächlich unter der Leitung von Dominikanern stehende Gruppe von Kontemplativen, die in häufigen, mündlichen und schriftlichen Kontakt miteinander standen, sich „Gottesfreunde“ nannten und von denen Taulers Briefwechsel mit Rulman Merswin und Heinrichs von Nördlingen brieflicher Kontakt mit Margaretha Ebner besonders bekannt sind. Ganz ähnlich wie der Autor der Cloud verhalten sich gerade auch die Gottesfreunde sehr ablehnend gegenüber der Theologengelehrsamkeit. Über Vermutungen kommen wir hier freilich nicht hinaus.¹²¹

The assumptions on which Riehle bases his theory of author and audience, however, seem neither sufficiently warranted nor substantial enough to support his association of Cloud with a lay movement of female piety. His contention that Cloud had a wide general circulation in manuscript, or that such a possibility was even envisaged by the author, has already been challenged. He is on equally dubious ground, moreover, when, disregarding the precise technical terms in which the author accounts for his contemplative theory and the attitude to scholarship which it involves, he links the use of the vernacular and the author's scepticism about the value of learning to the contemplative with lay spirituality: he speculates that the author might be a priest who,

... sich ganz bewußt mit der Bewegung der Laienmystik des Spätmittelalters identifiziert, ja sich selbst unter die theologisch ungebildeten Laien einreicht, nicht nur aus bescheidener Demut, sondern weil er die theologische Gelehrsamkeit als ein Gefähr für die Unmittelbarkeit des mystischen Erlebens sieht...,¹²²

and contends that he,

... in einer für den Charakter der spätmittelalterlichen Mystik bezeichnenden Weise sich über die Theologengelehrsamkeit abschätzig äußert und ihr die Unkompliziertheit des Laien, des Menschen, der "Lewyd", theologisch ungebildet ist, vorzieht.¹²³

In sum, the study of the theological and linguistic background of Cloud which has been the subject of this thesis has discovered persuasive arguments for linking the text with Carthusian tradition. Further, the inference that the author may himself have been a Carthusian or had close ties with the order has been corroborated, or at least not contradicted, by establishing that the circumstances of the early circulation of the text and many of its characteristics are entirely consistent with Carthusian authorship, and that the most likely categories of recipient for a work of this kind are such as are known to have received special attention from English Carthusian writers. The aspects of the debate on the authorship of Cloud which have been reviewed in this chapter have very much followed on the implications of the body of the thesis, and it seems apt to conclude with observations on some related issues which its discoveries have stimulated.

"Carthusian self-effacement", as Margaret Thompson terms it,¹²⁴ by no means ensured the anonymous circulation of all works written within the order. The apparent care which the author of the Cloud took to conceal his identity, however, is wholly consistent with the Carthusian ideal, and Walter Baier's summary of the characteristics of Carthusian writers which make it difficult to form a coherent impression of Carthusian spirituality, describes exactly the English author's attitude:

Erschwerend für die Herausarbeitung einer kartusianischen Spiritualität erweist sich ferner das beinahe ängstliche

Zurücktreten der Kartäuserschriftsteller hinter dem Inhalt ihrer Werke: Sie legen keinen Wert auf Berühmtheit, sprechen und schreiben wenig über Persönliches in ihrem Leben. Oft verschweigen sie sogar ihren Namen, wie allein die große Anzahl der anonymen Werke des Ordens zeigt.¹²⁵

Nevertheless, commentators on the Cloud have always been reluctant to concede the author his anonymity, and the ascription of the Cloud Corpus to Walter Hilton has a long and complex genealogy. The tradition of Hilton's authorship seems to have begun with James Grenehalgh and his annotations of MS Douce 262,¹²⁶ and scholars have divided on the merits of the case for Hilton's claim. Some have vacillated in their opinion: Helen Gardner, writing in 1947, confesses herself less certain than when she wrote her articles in 1933, 1936 and 1937;¹²⁷ and Prof. Hodgson, a staunch opponent of Hilton's authorship in 1955,¹²⁸ has since hinted, rather enigmatically, in conversation, that she considers the question less settled than previously. More recently, Wolfgang Riehle has tentatively added his voice to the claim for common authorship,¹²⁹ though in his book, Studien zur englischen Mystik des Mittelalters, he differentiates the two writers and distinguishes the Cloud author's exploratory approach to language and his verbal creativity from Hilton's more derivative usage.¹³⁰

The work of the present thesis, however, makes the earlier reluctance of Profs. Gardner and Hodgson to accept the ascription of the Cloud Corpus to Hilton unquestionably more sympathetic than their retractions. Its conclusions have, in a sense, been anticipated by the Rev. J.P.H. Clark, in his article "The 'Lightsome Darkness' - Aspects of Walter Hilton's Theological Background":¹³¹ it provides, that is, the kind of detailed analysis of the relationship of Cloud to the Dionysian mystical tradition which complements Clark's approach to Hilton and

which, he anticipates, will strengthen his argument against common authorship by demonstrating that the two authors represent distinct schools of mystical theology. Thus, while he infers that concepts of nakedness, blindness, darkness and nought, in the Cloud group, usually have to do with the theory of the apophatic way, Hilton's use of the same terms derives from Augustinian theology, and they are consequently associated in his work with the soul's inability to apprehend God in the early stages of its life of faith while it is still trammelled by sin and not yet divinely illumined. Hilton's theory of contemplative knowledge, Rev. Clark maintains, is also fundamentally Augustinian;¹³² he cites Scale II, ch. 34:

"the sight of ihesu is ful blis of a soule, & þat is not only for the sight, bot it is also for the blissed lufe that comith out of that sight. Nertheles for lufe comith oute of knowynge & not knowynge oute of luf, therfor it is seid that knowynge & in sight principally of God with lufe is the blis of a soule, & the more he is knowen the better is he lufed. Bot for as mikel as to this knowynge or to this luf that comith of it may not the soule come withoute luf, therefore seide I that thu schuldest only coueite luf..."¹³³

Hilton affirms, that is, that although an impulse of love first rouses the soul's yearning to know God, it is knowledge which ultimately takes precedence: the soul can only love fully that which it knows. It is precisely this point of doctrine - as it is held, for example, by St. Augustine - which Hugh of Balma contradicts in respect of mystical awareness of God in the Quaestio Unica which concludes his Viae Syon Lugent. In this sphere, Hugh insists, the opposite obtains: the soul is united to God through love alone, and only then achieves a kind of experiential knowledge of God whose medium is always love. This, too, is the Cloud author's conviction: Mary, he writes, who is the type of the contemplative,

... heng up hir loue & hir longing desire in þis cloude of unknowing,

& lernid hir to loue a þing þe whiche sche miȝt not se cleerly
in þis liif bi' lizt of vnderstondyng in hir reson... (Cloud 46/15-17).

The Cloud author's concurrence with Hugh on this crucial issue was a major factor in the argument of Ch. III of this thesis, allying the Cloud, through Hugh, with the development of the Dionysian mystical tradition in Carthusian circles. His divergence from Hilton, here, is therefore radical, and seems to confirm that we have to deal with two authors, who drew, admittedly, on a common theological stock but wrote within distinct traditions. Hilton's theory of contemplation owes much to the Victorines: his equation of sight with knowledge in Scale II, ch. 34, for example, is characteristic of Victorine theology, and implies that the contemplative experience differs in degree rather than kind from natural modes of cognition in which the intellect is instrumental.¹³⁴ The same association of sight and knowledge of this order occurs in the passage from Cloud, but both are isolated here from mystical awareness. Knowledge of the latter kind, for the Cloud author is something other, and a vocabulary of redefined terms is demanded to express it. For Hilton, there is no such tension between meaning and language, since he alludes to a kind of perception which has affinities with natural modes and to which their language is thus applicable.

The blanket distinction Cloud Corpus/Hilton Corpus is, of course, a crude basis on which to establish theological points of difference between the two authors. It is often agreed that Cloud has closer affinities with Qui Habitat and Bonum Est, for example, than with other works attributed to Hilton.¹³⁵ Further, neither author's theology can be adequately considered as a static entity: the circumstances in which individual works were compiled as well as the authors' spiritual and

literary maturity must have influenced style and content.¹³⁶ The two groups of texts are, however, sufficiently cohesive and distinct in terms of their manuscript traditions to sustain general comparisons, and some, which have a bearing on the issue of authorship, are, indeed, solicited by the present study.

For the most part, such comparisons weigh against common authorship. Michael G. Sargent, dealing with MS Heneage 3084 in his article, "A New Manuscript of The Chastising of God's Children with an Ascription to Walter Hilton", has recently written,

... with the exception of the common manuscript description of the Eight Chapters on Perfection as a translation of a work of Louis de Fontibus, and the ascription of the translation of the Stimulus Amoris, there is no evidence that Hilton interested himself in reproducing in English the writings of other men.¹³⁷

The Cloud author, by contrast, worked assiduously as a translator: no less than three of the seven texts attributed to him are based on Latin originals. He was, it seems, attentive to the needs of his audience for works of spiritual guidance in the vernacular, and as committed to giving them access to major theological sources at first hand in their own language as he was ready to address himself to their more immediate concerns in tracts of his own devising. As far as we know, he wrote exclusively in the vernacular, and perhaps his acknowledged mastery as a writer of English prose was due, in part, to innate literary instincts. But perhaps, too, it grew out of his response to the dual challenge of adapting the vernacular to the demands of Dionysian theology and engaging the understanding of his readers for its complexities - perhaps, indeed, he was impelled by these circumstances to exploit the resources of the English language and stretch his own creativity more than Hilton was

required to do, and Hilton has often been considered a more pedestrian prose writer.

Similarities between Hilton and the Cloud author, indeed, on issues which have received prominence in this thesis, have consistently been outweighed by points of difference. The inference that the Cloud had only a limited circulation, for example, is strengthened by contrasting its history in manuscript with that of the obviously popular Scale - and especially with that of Scale I. Dr. Doyle summarizes the position:

The magnitude of the success of the Scale may be gathered not only from the number of extant and recorded copies, but even more from the number and complication of the states and combinations of the text that may be found, and the pre-history they represent.¹³⁸

Both Scale and the equally popular epistle Mixed Life were also printed by de Worde as early as 1494, and Scale's early translation into Latin by the Carmelite Thomas Fishlake was a mark of the general esteem which the text quickly achieved.¹³⁹ Scale's established status, with Love's Mirror, as a classic of English devotional literature in the early sixteenth century is confirmed, Dr. Lovatt has commented, by Thomas More's recommendation of both works as proper reading for devout laymen in the preface to his Confutation of Tyndale's Answers (1531-32).¹⁴⁰

Hilton, it seems, wrote for a broader and more diverse audience than the Cloud author, and the different genres within which they worked must have had some bearing on the distribution of their respective texts. Undoubtedly, certain of the latter's works - notably the Tretyse of be Stodye of Wysdome, the Discrescyon of Spirites and the Discrecioun of Stirings - are less speculative than Cloud and Privy Counsel and are more uniformly concerned with the basic conduct and premises of the

contemplative life. They were, perhaps, intended for a different audience: the Tretyse of þe Stodye of Wysdome and Discrescyon of Spirites have no form of personal address, and the less restrictive character of their material seems to be consistent with the evidence of manuscripts, which suggests that they may have circulated more widely than the same author's more advanced, narrowly contemplative works. The Discrecioun of Stirings is again addressed to a "Goostly freend in God" (62/2), explicitly in response to a written request for spiritual guidance (63/13-15), but it does not seem to belong to the closely-knit group of Cloud, Privy Counsel and Deonise Hid Diuinite, and it makes no reference to them. It considers in detail, in fact, some of the issues which are treated rather perfunctorily in Cloud, ch. 42,¹⁴¹ and it seems likely that, if the recipient of the two texts was the same, the Discrecioun was the earlier work and deals with a stage of the contemplative life which the disciple had outgrown when he received Cloud.¹⁴² The recipient of the Discrecioun, it has often been pointed out, seems more likely to have been a solitary than an enclosed religious, since the implied freedom of his lifestyle seems inconsistent with conventual life - though such a one could subsequently have adopted a stricter or regular mode of life.¹⁴³ The recipients of Hilton's works, however, seem to have been more diverse, and his use of the vernacular, in consequence, seems to have various functions. Bk. I of the Scale, as Fr. Colledge has recently put it, "... was composed for and addressed to a woman recluse living in canonical enclosure" - though it envisages and certainly reached a much wider and more varied audience¹⁴⁴ - while Bk. II, he goes on, "...is written for 'a dear brother' evidently vowed to some form of contemplative life, but under conditions wholly different from those described in Book I".¹⁴⁵ Bk. II of Scale, in fact, rehandles the themes

of Bk. I with special emphasis on the more advanced stages of the contemplative life, and Prof. Hussey has, in fact, suggested that Hilton may have written it with a larger audience in view, who might benefit from a general manual on contemplation.¹⁴⁶ The use of the vernacular in Scale I, therefore, has possibly more in common with its use for the Ancrene Wisse, by Rolle in his writing of the Form of Living and English Psalter, and later by Love, who says that his Mirror is written "not onliche to clerkes in latyn but also in english to lewed men and wommen and hem that ben of symple understondynge",¹⁴⁷ than with its function for the Cloud author. In Cloud, Privy Counsel and Deonise Hid Diuinite, at least, the use of the vernacular is certainly not accompanied by any significant simplification of subject matter, and, if it was intended to open the text to a female audience, it assumes its readers to be none the less proficient intellectually for their lack of a Latin education. Nor - as may be the case with Scale II and is undoubtedly so with Mixed Life - does the choice of the vernacular have to do with broadening the text's applicability and perhaps making it accessible to a lay audience. It is noteworthy that the relationship of Privy Counsel to Cloud is not that of Scale II to Scale I: it is addressed to the same disciple, and explores the subject of contemplation more deeply and ruminatively, in accordance with the disciple's maturer understanding and richer experience of the contemplative life.¹⁴⁸

The Cloud author's defensive restrictions on the circulation of his work (1/8-3/8), indeed - though they may echo the traditional prohibitions to the uninitiated or those uncommitted to the contemplative life which preface the De Mystica Theologia and Hugh of Balma's Viae Syon Lugent, for example - may derive something of their urgency

from his awareness that the use of the vernacular, dictated as it was by the needs and capabilities of his intended audience, could also not help but make his work indiscriminately accessible to readers who might abuse or misapply its teaching, or perhaps radically misinterpret his meaning. He is clearly disturbed by the fact that his writing in the vernacular might cause him to be associated with popular heretical movements, and possibly nervous, too, that the theocentric nature of his theology might, in this context, be all too easily misconstrued to imply a rejection of orthodox liturgical religion.¹⁴⁹ Had it not been for the requirements of his audience, he would presumably have opted for the safer, because more restrictive medium of Latin - as Hilton does, in some of his shorter works, which have significant affinities with Cloud and its two most closely related epistles, the Pistle of Preier and Privy Counsel. The recipients of Hilton's Latin works seem, as might be expected, to be also such as he might unreservedly entrust with his private concerns and for whose ears he is ready to venture his opinion on contemporary religious controversies.¹⁵⁰ His Letter to a Hermit,¹⁵¹ for example, which is addressed to a priest who had become a solitary, is forthright and insistent in its personal advice on the conduct of the contemplative life, and hints, also, at some crisis in Hilton's own life.¹⁵² Hilton writes in Latin, too, when he broaches some of the contentious theological issues of his day: in the tract which begins "Numquid domini nostri.." (ascribed to him in MS Royal 11 B X, f.178), as Joy Russell-Smith has shown, Hilton enters into the contemporary debate which had been activated by the Wicliffite movement and formally commends the practice of venerating images.¹⁵³ His letter to Adam Horsley, written to support him in his decision to enter Beauvale Charterhouse (between May 1383 and March 1385), is at once intimate and public,

and is particularly akin, in this, to Privy Counsel. Joy Russell-Smith's description of the work takes account of both aspects:

The argument of his epistle, De Utilitate et Prerogatiuis Religionis shows that it was written to encourage and strengthen the half-formed intention of a friend to enter the religious life. Adam Horsley's hesitation and many personal fears become clear from Hilton's explanations and encouragement. At the same time there are signs that Hilton had other readers in mind also when he wrote: 'quomodo prouocem te et alios quoscumque ad religionis feruencio-rem emulacionem' (fol. 129v) (Bod. MS Lat. th. e 26). Indeed the scope and scale of the work seem designed to meet greater objections than those likely to have been raised by Horsley of his own accord.¹⁵⁴

The circumstances of Hilton's connexion with Beauvale Charterhouse through his relationship with Adam Horsley prompt a final speculation on the question of the authorship of the Cloud Corpus which is given some credibility by the work of this thesis. Prof. Hodgson's conclusion from her examination of the language of the Cloud author's works in manuscript, that they were most likely to have been written in a central district of the North-East Midlands,¹⁵⁵ has been generally approved. Supposing this to be indeed the case, it is perhaps not unreasonable to infer that the author, if a Carthusian, might have belonged to Beauvale Charterhouse, or that, if he were not himself enclosed, his association with the order might have been through this particular house. Its location at Gresley is within the appropriate dialect area, and the date of its foundation (1343) is consistent with the hypothesis.¹⁵⁶ Its geographical proximity to Hilton's house of Augustinian Canons at Thurgarton, moreover, would give substance to the textual evidence which suggests that a kind of ideological interchange went on between the two authors by providing a plausible physical context in which such a dialogue might have taken place. Perhaps, indeed, the possible connexion of both authors with Beauvale Charterhouse is at the centre of the complex web of associations

which link each author with the other and both with the Carthusian order. Hilton's ties with the order are various. Joy Russell-Smith comments on Hilton's reverence for the Carthusian ideal, and the reciprocal respect for Hilton's writings within the English charterhouses:

Interest in Hilton among English Carthusians was early and continuing... Hilton praises the Carthusian Order as 'mons Domini et mons pinguis in uertice aliorum monicum, id est aliorum religionum eminencius collocatus' in the De Utilitate et Prerogatiuis Religionis (fol.132), and the link with Adam Horsley is a likely origin of sound tradition concerning Hilton.¹⁵⁷

Hilton's letter to Adam Horsley was, in fact, commended by the Carthusian Prior Nicholas Love in his Mirror, and his popularity in Carthusian circles as it is reflected in their many transcriptions of his works has been amply documented, in particular by Doyle, Colledge and Sargent. Scale, at least, was also read in the continental charterhouses.¹⁵⁸ The particular esteem in which Hilton's works were held at Sheen seems, in fact, to have initiated a tradition that Hilton himself was professed there, which was propagated by Bale's reference to him as a Carthusian of Sheen.¹⁵⁹ The Cloud author's connexions with the order have been reviewed in this and the preceding chapter. The circumstances, then, are that two groups of work, close in theme, dialect and date, were produced towards the end of the fourteenth century. Cloud, and the texts which were early grouped with it in manuscript, circulated anonymously: Bk. I of Scale, Prof. Gardner suggests, may also have circulated anonymously at first,¹⁶⁰ but Hilton's works were often assigned to him by name in rubrics and colophons. Perhaps it is not surprising, on these grounds alone, that the Carthusian commentator Grenehalgh should have made the first ascription of Cloud to the more widely known and respected Hilton in his notes to MS Douce 262. It would be still less surprising, however, in view of the Cloud author's connexions with the order and Hilton's special links with Beauvale

Charterhouse, if the Cloud itself was produced at Beauvale. A Carthusian tradition which associated the Cloud with Beauvale Charterhouse might well have become confused by the fifteenth century, and this might account for Grenehalgh's note that Hilton was the author of the Cloud.