

MARK EDWARDS – DIMITRIOS PALLIS – GEORGIOS STEIRIS (eds),
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The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite stands as a welcome addition to scholarship on one of the most enigmatic and influential figures of late antique Christian thought. Edited by MARK EDWARDS, DIMITRIOS PALLIS, and GEORGIOS STEIRIS, the volume brings together thirty-nine essays by leading specialists in patristics, Neoplatonism, medieval thought, and modern theology, offering a thorough survey of the content and background of the Dionysian corpus, together with its intellectual context and reception across traditions.

The volume is structured in four broad sections: *The Corpus in its Historical Setting* (pp. 13–153), *Dionysius in the East* (pp. 155–314), *Dionysius in the West* (pp. 315–490), and Dionysius after the Western European Reformation (pp. 491–686). This arrangement embodies both a chronological and geographical rationale, which enables the reader to follow the trajectory of Dionysian influence across Byzantine, Latin, and modern contexts. The sheer breadth, ranging from Proclus and Gregory of Nyssa to Derrida and Marion, underscores the ‘protean character’ of the corpus, aptly described in the *Introduction*.

The editors’ introduction (pp. 1–12) can function itself as a substantial essay, tracing the pseudonymous identity of Dionysius, the debates surrounding authenticity, and the interpretative aspects – between mysticism and liturgy, Platonism and Christianity, theology and philosophy – that have shaped his reception. Their refusal to employ the derogatory “Pseudo-Dionysius” signals a methodological decision: the corpus is treated as a literary whole, whose authority lies less in historical authorship than in its theological and philosophical resonance.

The opening essays situate Dionysius against the backdrop of late antique philosophy and Christian theology. BEATE REGINA SUCHLA provides

a useful account of the textual history (*The Dionysian Corpus*, pp. 13–32). TIM RIGGS emphasizes the systematic coherence of the works (*Content of the Dionysian Corpus*, pp. 33–47). MAXIMOS CONSTAS examines Pauline resonances (*Dionysius and the New Testament*, pp. 48–63). MARK EDWARDS traces pre-Dionysian apophatic currents (pp. 64–76), while BOGDAN BUCUR deals with possible debts to Philo and Clement of Alexandria (pp. 77–93). ILARIA RAMELLI explores the contributions of Origen and Evagrius (*Origen, Evagrius, and Dionysius*, pp. 94–108). MICHAEL MOTIA compares Dionysius’ and Gregory of Nyssa’s theories of mystical ascent (*Dionysius and Gregory of Nyssa*, pp. 109–121). CHARLES STANG approaches Dionysius within the framework of Neoplatonism (*Dionysius, Iamblichus, and Proclus*, pp. 122–135), while MARK EDWARDS and JOHN DILLON analyze his reconfiguration of Neoplatonic philosophy (*God in Dionysius and the Later Neoplatonists*, pp. 136–153). Together, these chapters establish the corpus as a confluence of Christian theology and Platonic metaphysics.

The second section contains contributions on the Byzantine and Syriac traditions. EMILIANO FIORI examines the Syriac translation of Sergius of Resh‘ayna (*Dionysius in Syriac*, pp. 155–171). ISTVÁN PERCZEL traces early Greco-Syriac encounters (*Earliest Greco-Syriac Reception*, pp. 172–204). BEATE REGINA SUCHLA revisits John of Scythopolis and his scholia (pp. 205–221). MAXIMOS CONSTAS demonstrates how Maximus the Confessor assimilated Dionysius into his Christological synthesis (*Reception of Dionysius in Maximus*, pp. 222–240). MARK EDWARDS and DIMITRIOS PALLIS consider the Dionysian influence on John of Damascus’ works (pp. 241–255). GEORGE ARABATZIS highlights Theodore the Studite’s reception of Dionysius’ writings (pp. 256–268). ANTONIO RIGO investigates the line from Niketas Stethatos to Gregory the Sinaite and Gregory Palamas (pp. 269–287). TORSTEIN TOLLEFSEN focuses on Palamas and the essence-energies distinction (pp. 288–298). GEORGIOS STEIRIS closes the section with Pletho’s reworking of Dionysius (pp. 299–314). This sequence of essays demonstrates the manifold ways Byzantine thinkers both preserved and transformed the Dionysian inheritance.

The essays on the Latin Middle Ages constitute one of the most interesting parts of the volume. DEIRDRE CARABINE explores Eriugena’s cosmology of procession and return (*Occulti Manifestatio*, pp. 315–327). MARK EDWARDS discusses John Sarracenus and his Latin translation (pp. 328–342). DECLAN LAWELL provides studies on Dionysius’ reception by Robert Grosseteste (pp. 343–349) and by THOMAS GALLUS (*Affective*

Dionysianism, pp. 379–393). MONICA TOBON situates Bonaventure in the Franciscan tradition (pp. 350–366). PAUL ROREM highlights Hugh of St Victor (pp. 367–378). WAYNE HANKEY shows how Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas integrated Dionysius into Aristotelian categories (pp. 394–416). MARK EDWARDS identifies clear Dionysian references in Dante (pp. 417–427). PETER TYLER examines the Carthusians and the *Cloud of Unknowing* (pp. 428–453). THEO KOBUSCH analyzes Nicholas of Cusa (*Dionysius and Cusanus*, pp. 454–475). Finally, MARK EDWARDS, with MICHAEL ALLEN, presents Marsilio Ficino’s harmonization of Dionysius and Plato (pp. 476–490). This section demonstrates both the ubiquity and adaptability of Dionysian thought in the medieval West.

The final section demonstrates the enduring growth of Dionysian thought. DENIS ROBICHAUD reconstructs Valla’s and Erasmus’ critical engagement with the Dionysian question (pp. 491–515). JOHANNES ZACHHUBER examines Luther’s repudiation (pp. 516–534) and the Lutheran tradition (pp. 535–552). ANDREW LOUTH surveys the English-speaking reception (pp. 553–567). CHRISTIAN SCHÄFER reassesses HUGO KOCH and JOSEF STIGLMAYR on Dionysius and Proclus (pp. 568–583). MARK EDWARDS considers modern theologians, particularly DEAN INGE, VLADIMIR LOSSKY, and HANS URS VON BALTHASAR (pp. 584–603). DIMITRIOS PALLIS analyzes the reception of the corpus by Greek scholars and theologians (pp. 604–637). TIMOTHY KNEPPER treats Derrida and Marion (pp. 638–652). YSABEL DE ANDIA portrays Dionysius as a mystic (pp. 653–669). Finally, GYÖRGY GERÉBY argues for the political-theological dimension of the corpus (pp. 670–686). The sweep of these scholarly essays, from Renaissance humanism to deconstruction, underscores Dionysius’ unique ability to traverse theological and philosophical eras.

As a reference work, the *Handbook* is unparalleled. Each essay is accompanied by extensive bibliographies, which will be useful to scholars and students at all levels. The balance between philological detail (e.g. SUCHLA, pp. 13–32; PERCZEL, pp. 172–204) and broader intellectual history (e.g. CARABINE, pp. 315–327; LOUTH, pp. 553–567; KNEPPER, pp. 638–652) is well judged. If there is a limitation in this volume, it is perhaps the relative underrepresentation of exegetical and liturgical aspects of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, which, as recent Orthodox scholarship suggests, may be crucial for situating Dionysius within the lived experience of the Church. Similarly, while the essays are of good quality, the wide range of approaches inevitably produces particular tensions: some contributors emphasize Dionysius as a Neoplatonic philosopher, others as a mystical

theologian, still others as a biblical exegete. Yet, these divergences might be less a weakness than a faithful reflection of the polyvalence of the corpus itself.

The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite is a considerable achievement, providing both a synthesis of a century of scholarship and a foundation for new directions in research. For specialists in patristics, Byzantine studies, medieval philosophy, or modern theology, it will be a point of reference. For non-specialists, it will offer an authoritative guide to one of the most perplexing, yet fertile, authors of the Christian tradition. Like Dionysius himself, whose text has become inseparable from its reception, the *Handbook* will apparently shape scholarly engagement with Dionysius and his tradition well into the future.

Keywords

Corpus Dionysiacum; patristics; neoplatonism; medieval thought; modern theology