

John of Scythopolis on Apollinarian Christology and the Pseudo-Areopagite's True Identity

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As is well known, the *Corpus Dionysiacum* (CD) first appeared on the stage of history in the first quarter of the sixth century; what is less well known is that within a generation of its appearance the CD was commented upon by an Orthodox author, John of Scythopolis (d.c. 548). Thereafter, the CD was circulated in a much expanded format—prefaced with John's *Prologue* and annotated with his *Scholia*¹. John's interpretive work, so close in time to the composition of the CD itself, holds forth the promise of great insight into the earliest stage of the reception of the Areopagite's works in the Christian East. Unfortunately, with the passing of time, John's remarks became so intermingled with the comments of later authors (such as Maximus the Confessor and Germanus of Constantinople) that until quite recently modern scholars have been unable to isolate John's *Scholia* with any degree of certainty.² However, investigations of the *Scholia* are now entering a new stage, thanks in large part to the labors of Beate Regina Suchla. As she has demonstrated in a series of recent publications, it is possible to recover John's work through an early Syriac translation of the *Scholia* and a shorter Greek recension, both of which preserve the earliest version of the *Scholia*, that authored by John. To

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1. The 1634 edition by B. Corderius is reprinted in J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca* (Paris, 1857-1866) (hereafter PG), vol. 4. The *Prologue* and *Scholia* will be cited from this edition: by column and line number for the *Prologue*; by column and its number within its column for the *Scholia*.
2. Until recently, the only significant modern attempt to separate these comments has been by Hans Urs von Balthasar. "Das Scholienwerk des Johannes von Scythopolis," *Scholastik* 15 (1940): 16–38, as corrected and expanded in *Kosmische Liturgie*, 2nd ed. (Einsiedeln, 1961), pp. 644–672, under the title "Das Problem der Dionysius-Scholien." Von Balthasar was limited, however, by a poor Syriac manuscript, ignorance of the shorter Greek recension, and his own fallible (but brilliant) intuitions.

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date, however, she has published results for the scholia on the *Divine Names* alone.³ Using a similar approach, the authors of this article have tentatively identified John's comments on the rest of the CD as well.⁴ It is now possible to begin examining thematic aspects of John's *Scholia* and to understand something of his intentions in commenting upon the CD. With this goal in mind, we here investigate John's comments on a number of intertwined issues, chiefly, the Christology of Apollinaris and the authenticity of the works of Dionysius.

In these investigations new light is thrown not only upon the earliest reception of the CD in the Christian East, but also upon John's position vis-à-vis contemporary christological controversies and changing theological methodologies. The first half of the sixth century saw christological allegiances divided between strict dyophysite Chalcedonians loyal to Antioch and Leo's *Tome*; Neo-Chalcedonians seeking to reconcile Chalcedon and the legacy of Cyril of Alexandria; and several anti-Chalcedonian parties, most especially the strict Cyrillians, usually (though unfairly) called "Monophysites." As if these parties were not enough to satisfy even the most perverse of historians, in the background still hovered the specter of Apollinaris and in the foreground was arising a renewed controversy over Origen.⁵ In a sectarian milieu such as this, one can well understand the changes taking place in theological methodology as protagonists sought ever more explicit support in the canon of "select fathers" and thus set about crafting, defending and refuting forgeries.⁶

3. The results of Suchla's researches as they pertain to the unravelling of the *Scholia* can be found in the following publications: "Die sogenannten Maximus-Scholien des Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen I. Philologisch-Historische Klasse* (hereafter NAWG) (1980) 3: 31-66; "Die Überlieferung des Prologs des Johannes von Scythopolis zum griechischen Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum," NAWG (1981) 4: 176-187.

Some of these results are also available in the introduction to the new edition of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, 2 vols., B. R. Suchla, G. Heil, A. M. Ritter, eds., *Patristische Texte und Studien* 33/36 (Berlin, 1990-1991), 1: 38-54. This is the edition of the CD used here, though citations are identified according to the columns of the older edition as found in PG 3, which the new edition retains in its margins. In quoting the CD, for convenience we employ the translation of Colin Luibheid, *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works* (New York, 1987). DN=*Divine Names*; EH=*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*; CH=*Celestial Hierarchy*; MT=*Mystical Theology*; Ep=*Epistles*.

4. See below, pages 474-475.
5. On sixth-century Christology in general, see Patrick T. R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451-553)* (Leiden, 1979); S. Helmer, *Der Neuchalcedonismus* (Bonn, 1962); A. Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, trans. P. Allen and J. Cawte, vol. 2/1 (Atlanta, 1987); idem, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, vol. 2/2 (Fribourg, 1989).
6. For the changing theological methodologies, see the important contributions of Patrick T. R. Gray, "The Select Fathers': Canonizing the Patristic Past," *Studia Patristica* 23 (1989): 21-36; idem, "Forgery as an Instrument of Progress: Reconstructing the Theological Tradition in the Sixth Century," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 81 (1988): 284-289.

1.

Scythopolis, despite its name, was far from being a "Scythian" city. With a territory encompassing the Jordan and Harod valleys, as well as the Gilboa mountains, it served as provincial capital for the province of Palaestina Secunda, and thus as a center for late Roman administrative and military activity. Neither should Scythopolis (also known as Beit She'an) be considered a provincial backwater, mired in native traditions and insulated from the mainstream of late Roman cultural life. It was a highly Hellenized city: the remains of church buildings, a modest synagogue and an immense Roman theater testify to its level of Greco-Roman culture.⁷ Scythopolis was cosmopolitan to a degree seldom attained in the later Roman Empire: home to Jews and Christians and pagans, but also a center for Samaritan cultural and political activities, most notably the successive revolts of 529 and 578. From this background emerged John, a man in many respects as sophisticated and cosmopolitan as his city.

What can be known of John's life is easily told, for its details are all but lost to the modern historian. His thorough grounding in the Greek classics, the Bible, and the Fathers is amply documented from the *Scholia*.⁸ Similarly, we learn from Leontius of Jerusalem that his neighbor and contemporary John through long labors amongst the works of Apollinaris had shown himself adept at exposing Apollinarian forgeries.⁹ His title, "Scholasticus," indicates that he may have been a lawyer first of all. If so, he was perhaps attached to the episcopal see, rather than to the Roman administrative apparatus in Scythopolis, at least judging from his authorship of christological polemics long before he became a bishop. John served as bishop of Scythopolis apparently between Theodosius, who last appears at the Synod of Jerusalem in 536, and Theodore, who was appointed to the see in 548.¹⁰ As argued below, John's comments on the CD were likely written early in his episcopate.

7. Marilyn J. Chiat, "Synagogues and Churches in Byzantine Beit She'an," *Journal of Jewish Art* 7 (1980): 6-24. For earlier bibliography and an overview, see Baruch Lifshitz, "Scythopolis: L'histoire, les institutions et les cultes de la ville à l'époque hellénistique et impériale," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 8.2 (Berlin, 1977), pp. 262-294.

8. For an overview of references to John, his works, and his citations of various authors, see Bernard Flusin, *Miracle et Histoire dans l'oeuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis* (Paris, 1983), pp. 17-29. For an idea of the range of authors cited by John, see also the preliminary list compiled by von Balthasar, pp. 652-653, 655-657, 666-667.

More recent studies have documented an intriguing number of unacknowledged citations from Plotinus: R. M. Franks, "The Use of the Enneads by John of Skythopolis," *Le Muséon* 100 (1987): 101-108; W. Beierwaltes, "Johannes von Skythopolis und Plotin," *Studia Patristica* 11.2, *Texte und Untersuchungen* 108 (Berlin, 1972), pp. 3-7; W. Beierwaltes and R. Kannicht, "Plotin-Testimonia bei Johannes von Skythopolis," *Hermes* 96 (1968): 247-251.

9. *Contra Monophysitas*, PG 86: 1865BC. See Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus*, p. 253 and Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, pp. 122-123.

10. For Theodosius at the 536 synod, see E. Schwartz, ed., *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, tom. 3 (Berlin, 1940), p. 188.8. On Theodore, see Cyril of Skythopolis, *Life of Sabas*, ed.

Like many other sixth-century theologians, John's works have fared poorly at the hands of tradition. Photius informs us about a work of John's, no longer extant, entitled *Against the Aposchists*. This treatise John wrote at the request of "a certain high-priest" named Julian.¹¹ Comprising twelve books, it was a response to an anonymous work entitled *Against Nestorius*, a treatise apparently condemning Chalcedon as Nestorian—hence, John's defense of the two-nature formula of Chalcedon and his polemic against Dioscorus and Eutyches. Photius is full of praise for John's work: its style is clear and pure; its vocabulary appropriate to the narrative genre; it provides an abundance of scriptural citations, but does not disdain the use of logical arguments when appropriate. When Severus of Antioch, tireless opponent of Chalcedonian Christology, noted that John composed a lengthy work in defense of that council, he was probably referring to this same treatise. Severus knew of the work shortly before his exile to Alexandria in 518 and likened it to John the Grammarian's defense of Chalcedon.¹²

Photius also informs us that John wrote a treatise (again no longer extant) in three books refuting the Nestorians, although in this instance the "Nestorian" who in turn refuted his work, Basil of Cilicia, was in fact a strict dyophysite adherent of Chalcedon. From Photius's summary of Basil's long refutation of this treatise, it is possible to garner some idea of John's arguments. As in his refutation of the Monophysites, John's work abounded with the exegesis of Scripture. The texts in question were the standard passages used by Cyril of Alexandria and his followers to defend the theopaschite formula (that is that one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh) and to

F. Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis* (Leipzig, 1939), pp. 197.19–26 (hereafter *Life of Sabas*).

For details on the chronology of John's episcopate, see F. Loof's overturning of Lequien's views, *Leontius von Byzance* (Leipzig, 1887), pp. 269–272. Leontius of Jerusalem's reference to John as the Bishop of Scythopolis dates from 538 to 543; see note 9 above; Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon*, pp. 122–123; and Lorenzo Perrone, *La Chiesa di Palestina e le Controversie Cristologiche* (Brescia, 1980), p. 246.

11. The full title, *Against Those Who Separate Themselves from the Church, Which is to Say, Against Eutyches and Dioscoros and Those of the Same Opinion Who Refuse to Proclaim Christ in Two Natures*, is given by Photius, *Bibliothèque*, ed. R. Henry, 8 vols. (Paris, 1958–1967), Cod. 95, 2: 48. The "high priest" may be Julian the Metropolitan of Bostra, an important Chalcedonian adversary of Severus; see E. Honigmann, *Evêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VI^e siècle*, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 127 (hereafter CSCO), Subsidia 2 (Louvain, 1951), pp. 76–77. Photius suggests that the unknown author being refuted by John may have been Basil of Cilicia, the strict dyophysite Chalcedonian discussed below. But this is unlikely, since the tendency of the work to which John was responding was Monophysite, as noted by Honigmann, *Evêques et évêchés*, pp. 80–81; Perrone, *La Chiesa di Palestina*, pp. 241–242; and Helmer, *Der Neuchalkedonismus*, p. 177, n. 397a.
12. J. Lebon, trans., *Severi Antiocheni liber contra impium Grammaticum: Oratio tertiae pars prior*, CSCO 94, *Scriptores Syri* 46 (Louvain, 1952), pp. 201–202. Severus wrote this refutation during the first year of his exile (519); see J. Lebon, *Le Monophysisme Sévérien* (Louvain, 1909), p. 153.

advance its anti-Nestorian corollary that there was only one subject in the incarnation.¹³ Basil, considered by Photius to be “sick with the heresy of Nestorius,” objected that John “urged nothing other than the twelve chapters of Cyril, and especially the twelfth which adds theopaschism.”¹⁴ The attention given here to the theopaschite formula probably indicates a date after 519 when the theopaschite controversy began its rapid spread throughout Christendom, although Photius himself reported a slightly earlier context.

The post-Chalcedonian *via media* indicated by these two treatises is confirmed in part by a fragment of a third christological work, *Against Severus*. Cited in the *Doctrina Patrum* and included in the acts of the Lateran Council (649) and the Sixth Ecumenical Council (681), this fragment was there pressed into the service of the anti-Monothelite campaign, in that it states clearly that “our one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, his divinity and his humanity, indivisibly and without change has two activities (*energeias*).”¹⁵ The preserved fragment, from John’s eighth book, is concerned to defend the assertion in Leo’s *Tome* that “each form with the union of the other does what it holds to be its own.”¹⁶ Severus considered this statement a threat to the unity of Christ’s person. *Against Severus* must have been composed after 518, since it mentions the rift between Severus and Julian of Halicarnassus. If it is assumed that John was arguing against a living opponent and thus that Severus was still alive, its *terminus ad quem* would be 538.

For his defense of Chalcedon, John earned the admiration and gratitude of a patriarch and a pope. Sophronius of Jerusalem, offering testimonies in his Synodical Epistle (c. 638) in support of the two activities in Christ, mentioned “John among the saints, the Bishop of Scythopolis, who wisely and piously exerted himself on behalf of the Council of Chalcedon.”¹⁷ In his epistle to Constantine Pogonatus, the Roman Pope Agatho (c. 680) called John a defender of Catholic doctrine and one of the “venerable fathers” who

13. Photius, *Bibliothèque Cod.* 107, 2: 74–78. For the exegetical issues, see Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon*, pp. 113–114.

14. *Ibid.*, 2, 78.5–11. Basil lived well into the reign of Justinian, see Photius, *Bibliothèque Cod.* 42, 1: 26–27. On dating John’s work after the outbreak of the theopaschite dispute in 519, see Honigmann, *Evêques et évêchés* pp. 80–81.

15. F. Diekamp, ed., *Doctrina Patrum de incarnatione Verbi: Ein griechisches Florilegium aus der Wende des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd ed. (Münster, 1981), pp. 85–86; G. D. Mansi, ed., 53 vols., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence, 1761–1772), 10: 1108B and 11: 437D–440C. This last location, the largest version of the fragment, shows John’s concern for Apollinaris at 440A.

16. Leo’s *Tome* reads, “Agit enim utraque forma cum alterius communione quod proprium est,” *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, N. Tanner et al., eds., 2 vols. (London, 1991), 1: 79, col. 2, 3–5. For Severus’s objections to this statement of the *Tome*, see E. W. Brooks, ed. and trans., *A Collection of Letters of Severus of Antioch from Numerous Syriac Manuscripts*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 12.2 (Paris, 1915), p. 180, Ep. 1: To Oecumenus (hereafter Letters of Severus).

17. Photius, *Bibliothèque Cod.* 231, 5: 66.

wrote in defense of the Council of Chalcedon and Leo's *Tome*, a theologian worthy to be named alongside Cyril of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom.¹⁸ The counterpart of this praise, and perhaps more indicative of John's abilities as a theologian, is the heated censure he received in his own time from his opponents on both sides of the Chalcedonian formula. Severus of Antioch found John a thorn in his side and referred to him as that "wretched man from Scythopolis."¹⁹ On the opposite front, Basil of Cilicia, the strict dyophysite interpreter of Chalcedon, not only opposed John's Christology, but also heaped calumny upon him with the stock charges that he supported Manicheanism, participated in Greek mysteries, and was captive to sordid forms of gluttony!²⁰

John was attacked from both sides because he was, in short, a Cyrillian Chalcedonian. Like others whose position has been called "Neo-Chalcedonian" and who triumphed at the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553), John promoted both Chalcedon and the theopaschite views of Cyril.²¹

2.

The paucity of texts hitherto attributable to John contrasts sharply with the firm recovery of a large "new" work, over one hundred columns of Migne text: John's *Scholia* to the *Corpus Dionysiacum*.²² Suchla has identified those portions of the *Scholia* on the *Divine Names* which are clearly by John. In like manner we have identified the comments by John on the rest of the CD as well. For this purpose, the Greek edition in Migne was collated against the best Syriac manuscript which contains the shorter Syriac recension, London BM 12152 (Syr). We have also on occasion had recourse to the shorter Greek recension as witnessed in Florenz, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Con. Conv. Soppr., Cod. 202 (FA).

An approximate date for the composition of the *Scholia* can be deduced from various external factors and from the internal references to the Origenist controversy which spread from Palestine after 532. John clearly refers to this dispute as a contemporary problem.²³ More precisely, he notes with

18. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, II: 270C.

19. Severus observes that certain men were slandering the Council of Ephesus (449) in that Dioscorus had there welcomed Eutyches back into communion: "Not only the wretched man from Scythopolis, but many others besides him and after him," Brooks, ed., *Letters of Severus*, Ep. 31. 264.6.

20. As reported by Photius, *Bibliothèque* Cod. 107, 2: 74.

21. On John's theopaschism, see *Scholia* 221.8, 236.10, and 360.7.

22. About a third of the 1,673 *Scholia* printed in Migne can be assigned to John. Since they are often longer than the others, they constitute perhaps forty percent of the 225 columns of the text as printed by Migne. Suchla reports finding scholia by John which are not in Migne.

23. *Scholia* 173.8: "And even now some are proceeding from the myths, not teachings, of Origen." See also *Scholia* 172.11 and 545.8. See *Life of Sabas* 188.3-24.

approval Antipater of Bostra's work against Origen, which was not invoked in these disputes until 537/538.²⁴ Nevertheless, the *Prologue* and at least one scholion still refer to Origen himself and to Evagrius with a measure of approval, which may mean that they appeared before the edict against Origen in 543, which John as the Metropolitan of Scythopolis would surely have known.²⁵ This would date John's *Scholion* within a year or two of 540.

The last of John's works to be mentioned is his *Prologue* to the CD. Like his *Scholion* this work was corrupted in the Manuscript tradition, numerous additions having been added to John's text by later writers. But again, Suchla was able to recover the original version of the text.²⁶ From the text of the *Prologue*, as is seen below, it is clear that John intended it to stand in close relation to the *Scholion*, making it likely that it was written at the same time. This integral relation is confirmed by the Greek Manuscript tradition, for with few exceptions the *Scholion*, *Prologue* and CD are transmitted together.²⁷

Many of John's comments on the CD seem straightforward: identifications of biblical allusions, explanations of obscure terminology or syntax, invocations of one of the Fathers or a classical Greek authority. Many are quite complicated: philosophical explanations directly dependent upon Neoplatonism, christological affirmations and condemnations, subtle references to Origen and Origenists. While all of these facets of the *Scholion* and more will be covered in a monograph now in preparation, the intention here is to introduce only two specific and intertwined issues: Apollinarian Christology and the authentic authorship of the CD.

3.

John in his *Prologue* insists first of all upon the nobility and personal integrity of Dionysius in order to assert his orthodoxy in doctrine and his honesty in authorship.²⁸ He was, after all, an Areopagite. "The excellent Dionysius was mentioned with his house because of his extraordinary wisdom and select and blameless way of life among the Athenians. . . . Only the

24. Antipater (see *Scholion* 176.3) was used against the Origenists by Gelasius at the beginning of his hegumenate in 537/538, as noted in the *Life of Sabas* 189.14–22.

25. Origen is used and named as an authoritative Father in the *Prologue* (20C), *Scholion* 549.6 and perhaps 337.5, although the text of the latter scholion could be corrupt. Origen's *Hexpla* is used without attribution in 421.1. The similar use of Evagrius in *Scholion* 76.7 is not found in Syr; it is found in FA, where Evagrius is not, however, called "impious," as in Migne's edition.

26. Suchla, "Die Überlieferung," pp. 176–187.

27. Suchla, "Eine Redaktion des griechischen Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum im Umkreis des Johannes von Skythopolis, des Verfasser von Prolog und Scholien: Ein dritter Beitrag zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des CD," NAWG (1985) 4: 179–193.

28. This outline of the *Prologue* is confirmed in the textual criticism and reconstruction of Suchla, "Die Überlieferung," p. 179: integrity, *Prologue* 16.4 to 17.49; orthodoxy, *Prologue* 17.50 to 20.27; authenticity, *Prologue* 20.31 to 21.8.

leading Athenians who were distinguished in family, wealth, and good life judged at the Court of the Areopagus."²⁹ Converted by Saint Paul, and then "educated under Hierotheus the great, as he himself says, and seated by the Christ-bearing Paul as bishop of the faithful in Athens," such a man could only be upright and orthodox, despite ignorant charges to the contrary.³⁰

And some dare to abuse the divine Dionysius with charges of heresy, being themselves absolutely ignorant of heresy. . . . For what would they say of his theology of the only-worshipped Trinity? Or what about Jesus Christ, one of this all-blessed Trinity, the only begotten Word of God who willed to become fully human? Did he [Dionysius] not expound upon the rational soul and the earthly body like ours, and all the other items mentioned by the orthodox teachers? For what [error] could anyone rightly blame him, with respect to conceptual and intelligent and perceptible things? Or concerning our general resurrection which will happen with both our body and our soul? And concerning the judgment then of the just and the unjust? To speak in short, our salvation is focused on these points, which it would not be right to go through in detail, since the exposition on the *Scholias* signifies all of these things at the proper time.³¹

By insisting that Dionysius taught and believed in a "fully human" Christ with "rational soul and earthly body like ours," John indicated his concern to repudiate the heresy of Apollinaris, long since dead (c. 392), but not at all forgotten.³²

Apollinarians, fervently defending Christ's full divinity, argued that the Logos replaced the rational soul of the human nature. The Council of Constantinople (381) ruled that Christ's full humanity was thus compromised, and condemned this Christology in its first canon. Apollinaris, however, had an influential afterlife, for some of his writings were falsely attributed to Athanasius and Pope Julius, among others. These were the "Apollinarian forgeries" which continued to bedevil the christological disputes of the sixth century and which John had shown himself so adept at ferreting out.³³ The original heresy of Apollinaris was no longer overtly championed by anyone; what persisted was his overall emphasis on Christ's divinity to the apparent neglect of his humanity.

In his *Prologue*, John responds not only to attacks upon Dionysian orthodoxy but also to doubts about the apostolic authenticity of these writings. Why had Eusebius been silent about these writings? Because Eusebius, by his own admission, was unfamiliar with a great number of earlier works, even

29. *Prologue* 16.25–30, 32–35.

30. *Prologue* 17.36–41.

31. *Prologue* 20.10–12, 16–30.

32. With regard to John's *Prologue*, Charles Moeller exaggerates somewhat in saying that "Tout le prologue est orienté dans le sens antiapollinariste," in his article "Le chalcédonisme et le néo-chalcédonisme en Orient de 451 à la fin du VI^e siècle," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, eds., 2 vols. (Würzburg, 1951), 1: 644, n. 23.

33. On the Apollinarian forgeries, see H. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule* (Tübingen, 1904), pp. 91–124 and E. Mühlhberg, *Apollinaris von Laodicea* (Leipzig, 1969), pp. 97–105.

some from his own land.³⁴ Why did Dionysius use so much philosophy? Because he was responding to Timothy's request for help in refuting the philosophers of Ephesus. "There is nothing unreasonable in this! Even the Apostle Paul, beloved of God, employed the sayings of the Greeks, having by chance heard these from his companions who were well-versed in Greek philosophy."³⁵ John turns immediately from rebuttal to a positive argument for the genuine apostolicity of the Areopagite's works. "That these writings truly belong to Dionysius is confirmed by the fact that he off-handedly mentions the sayings of men who were his contemporaries, and who were also mentioned in the divine *Acts of the Apostles*."³⁶ Here, too, we must look to the *Scholia* for concrete references to Dionysian authenticity, with "off-hand" remarks about apostolic contemporaries. There we will also find John refuting a specific attempt to identify the real author of the CD.

4.

Amid their myriad concerns, some of John's *Scholia* reinforce Dionysian orthodoxy and honesty. As the *Prologue* linked Christ's "rational soul and earthly body" to the resurrection of our souls and bodies, so too the *Scholia* express this christological soteriology. "And note that he calls the salvation of the soul and body 'whole.' Therefore, when he says elsewhere 'the transcendent Jesus wholly and completely took on our human substance,' be sure you understand the incarnation of a rational soul and body."³⁷ Here the reference to Jesus' "rational soul" indicates a concern for Apollinarian Christology, yet still without naming it.

When John gets more specific about his christological opponents, the whole panorama of sixth-century disputes opens up before us. "Note the incomparable orthodoxy of the great Dionysius, and how he guards the distinction between the divinity of the Lord Jesus and the flesh."³⁸ What such comments actually meant within John's context of convoluted polemics and post-Chalcedonian strategies cannot be fully covered here, although we can note certain basic patterns which pertain directly to the question of authorship.

When "Dionysius" revealed his Christology, usually tangential to his core arguments, he largely shared in the spirit of Zeno's *Henoticon* (482) in that he

34. *Prologue* 20.33–43.

35. *Prologue* 21.1–4. Suchla notes some textual variants here, but nothing on the basic point.

36. *Prologue* 21.4–8.

37. *Scholia* 181.17. The passage "elsewhere" is DN 2 644 31–32, which receives important comments, *Scholia* 221.8, see note 44 below. When Dionysius said (Ep 8 1088A) that the prodigal son was embraced "wholly," John adds, "'Whole,' he says, meaning that the Lord, having taken soul and body, has saved us whole, of soul and body," *Scholia* 545.8.

38. *Scholia* 157.1. Apollinaris had minimized the distinction between the divinity of the Word and his flesh, see *De fide et incarnatione* 6, in Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea*, pp. 197–198.

eschewed most of the terminology of the Chalcedonian formula, presenting instead a prior, indeed "apostolic," way of speaking about the incarnation. There is, however, an important exception. Several times Dionysius used the Chalcedonian (and Neoplatonic) adverb "unconfusedly" to describe Christ's incarnation, an orthodox formulation "which guards the distinction." John, more willing than the Arcopagite to use the language of Chalcedon, seized upon these occasions eagerly. For example, Dionysius had said of Christ: "with neither change nor confusion of what constitutes him, he came into our human nature." John comments: "Note also that 'without confusion' and 'without change,' which he said, are from the apostles, as also is 'the whole man.'"³⁹ Here John finds in Dionysius an apostolic warrant for both the Chalcedonian expression "without confusion" and also a phrase ("the whole man") which opposes Apollinarianism. When Dionysius used the adverb of Chalcedon on another occasion, John applied his apostolic witness to several recent errors, this time naming names. "Note the precision of the teachings, which is clear in a multitude of passages, and fights all heretics. On the one hand, that God's providence for us was independently active means that he himself was the God Word, not the one in the other, as some rave with Nestorius. On the other hand, the phrase 'in a true sharing of all our properties, yet sinlessly' overthrows the Manicheans, the Eutychians, the Apollinarians, the Akephaloi, and all other heretics at once."⁴⁰

As a Cyrillian Chalcedonian, John charted the narrow passage between the Nestorian and the Eutychian errors, as introduced above and evident in the *Scholia*.⁴¹ Yet our own focus must here remain on Apollinaris, who elsewhere is often opposed by name. "Behold, he says that one of the hypostases participated in us wholly; as the Apostle said, 'in him the fullness of the Deity dwells bodily.' The word 'wholly' is also contrary to Apollinaris, for it indicates that he assumed a complete humanity."⁴² The specific language of the *Prologue*, that Christ was completely incarnate, is also used to comment on the Dionysian summary of the Creed. Dionysius said that Christ "gave us a most perfect share of his nature by completely taking on our own." John adds, "Note what he says about Christ, i.e., his complete incarnation, against Apollinaris."⁴³

Dionysius never spoke of Christ's rational or logical soul, but from his

39. *Scholia* 197.2 (on DN 1 592B). The parallel, *Scholia* 196.6, is not in Syr. Compare *Scholia* 220.3 and 229.5, and remarks such as "without change" in *Scholia* 57.2 and 57.3.

40. *Scholia* 149.2 (on EH 3 441B), see Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus*, p. 65. John here groups together those who, in his view, denigrate the reality of the incarnation. The name "Akephaloi" ("headless ones") was originally applied to the strict Monophysites who separated themselves from Peter Mongus following his acceptance of Zeno's *Hemotikon*. It was later used with reference to the Monophysites in general.

41. "Note that this is [said] against the Nestorians and the Akephaloi," *Scholia* 57.3, 165.18, and 425.2. See *Scholia* 72.5, 197.6, 216.3, 221.8.

42. *Scholia* 196.4 (on DN 1 592A), quoting Colossians 2:9.

43. *Scholia* 144.14 (on EH 3 436D), only the last phrase is in Syr.

phrase “completely incarnate” John extrapolated an affirmation of Christ’s “rational soul and earthly body” like ours, as already evident from his *Prologue*. In a scholion which reveals his Christology in general, John said that God the Word “in truth had a body and logical soul and suffered in the flesh.”⁴⁴ When Dionysius speaks of “Jesus according to us,” John stretches the occasion to add, “He says that it is ‘perfect,’ contra Apollinaris, because it is from a rational soul and our body.”⁴⁵ The *Prologue*’s full phrase (“rational soul and earthly body”) appears on yet another occasion when the Arcopagite uses the qualifier “without confusion.” Dionysius writes, “Out of love for humanity Christ emerged from the hiddenness of his divinity to take on human shape, to be utterly incarnate among us while yet remaining unmixed [without confusion].” To this, John adds: “He says ‘utterly’ since he took on a rational soul and an earthly body. And correctly he says ‘unmixed incarnation.’ For he remains God while seen as human, and preserving the properties of each nature. Note that this is against the Apollinarians.”⁴⁶ Not only is this against the Apollinarians, but the phrase “preserving the properties of each nature” is from Chalcedon and Leo’s *Tome*. Only rarely does the “Neo-Chalcedonian” John sound so dyophysite; on only one occasion does he even use the phrase “in two natures.”⁴⁷

John’s campaign to oppose an Apollinarian Christology is summed up in his comment on the famous Fourth Letter. “Note the entire reading of the letter, since it is against every heresy, old and new.”⁴⁸ That an anti-Apollinarian argument opposes every heresy, old and new, could only be asserted by someone inordinately concerned to defend Dionysius against Apollinarianism on every occasion. But why? Partially, because “heresies, like Christian orthodoxy, must have their Fathers,” as Grillmeier says so well.⁴⁹ Apollinaris had become the Father of the Eutychian error generally and of its anti-Chalcedonian offshoots which still used the Apollinarian forgeries. But there is more to this story than Christology in general. John’s interest in refuting the views of Apollinaris must be seen in the context of his advocacy of

44. *Scholion* 221.8 (on DN 2 644C). The phrase “logical soul” repeats Chalcedon exactly. The theopaschite sentiments are also found in *Scholion* 236.10 and 360.7. The Phantasiastai were Monophysites who followed Julian of Halicarnassus after he split with Severus around 519.

45. *Scholion* 216.3 (on DN 2 640C).

46. *Scholion* 149.15 (on EH 3 444C). FA includes the full text, but Syr omits the phrase ἐκατέρας φύσεως σώζων τὰ ἰδιώματα which repeats Leo’s *Tome* (“salva igitur proprietate utriusque naturae”) and Chalcedon: σωζομένης δὲ μάλλον τῆς ἰδιότητος ἐκατέρας φύσεως. See Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, pp. 78 and 86.

47. That is, *Scholion* 57.3: “For one and the same Christ accomplished the great mystery of the economy in two natures.” After quoting Philipppians. 2:6, the scholion concludes “behold, two forms.” This portion of *Scholion* 57.3 is not in Syr; it seems to have been intentionally omitted by the Monophysite Syriac translator, as also is apparently the case in *Scholion* 149.15 (previous note).

48. *Scholion* 532.4 (on Ep 4 1072A), see Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus*, pp. 180–181.

49. Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, p. 78.

the authentic authorship of Dionysius, a campaign which had to counter both some generic suspicions and also a specific claim to identify the heretical author of the CD as none other than Apollinaris himself.

5.

John's *Prologue* reinforced its assertions of Dionysian orthodoxy and integrity by calling him the "excellent" or "divine" or "great" Dionysius, or even "Saint Dionysius."⁵⁰ These brief tributes also run through the *Scholia*, along with "blessed" and "sacred." The most common expression is "the great Dionysius."⁵¹ The *Scholia* build only slightly upon the link to Saint Paul, who converted Dionysius and also "ordained him high-priest of the church of the Athenians."⁵² Paul also taught Dionysius and some others about the celestial mysteries revealed in the "third heaven," says John, although neither he nor Dionysius stress this special revelation.⁵³

The *Prologue's* assertion that this corpus is authentic in that it off-handedly refers to apostolic contemporaries is repeated by several *Scholia*. "Note also that this divine man was present with the apostles, Peter and James."⁵⁴ At the name "Bartholomew," John sees another opening. "Note also from this the authenticity of the fact that these divine writings are of the great Dionysius. In addition to these [comments about Bartholomew], in earlier books he made mention of pronouncements of certain men who were with the apostles."⁵⁵ That Dionysius used a written or unwritten saying of "Justus" also "establishes the antiquity of Saint Dionysius and the fact that he flourished with the apostles themselves and apostolic men."⁵⁶ That he knew what Paul's opponent Elymas had to say gives John another chance to assert the "antiquity of this saint."⁵⁷

Occasionally, the "biographical" details divulged in the CD require John to provide brief explanations or clarifications. Dionysius called Timothy his "child," even though Timothy was the first in the faith, because the former

50. "Excellent" and "divine" quoted above, at *Prologue* 16.25 and 20.11; "great" at *Prologue* 16.4 and 17.25; "hagios" at *Prologue* 17.45.

51. "Blessed" in *Scholia* 29.3, 33.10, 425.11, 536.5; "sacred" in *Scholia* 61.4; "divine" in *Scholia* 248.1, 249.4, 281.4, 373.1, 573.7; "Saint" Dionysius in *Scholia* 176.4, 253.1, 393.1, and perhaps 248.2; and the "great" Dionysius in *Scholia* 29.1, 60.1, 65.5, 77.5, 80.7, 109.2, 133.2, 329.1, 336.4, 337.5, 361.1, 373.1, 380.1, 429.3, 537.2, 553.9, and 573.7.

52. *Scholia* 552.11; Compare "bishop" in *Prologue* 17.40, quoted above.

53. *Scholia* 64.4 (on CH 6 200D), quoting 2 Corinthians 12:2. Compare *Scholia* 56.1 and 64.10. The portion of *Scholia* 92.2 which refers to the "third heaven" is not in Syr.

54. *Scholia* 236.8, regarding the Dormition of the Virgin Mary.

55. *Scholia* 420.2 (on MT 1 1000B).

56. *Scholia* 393.1 (on DN 11 949A). For "Justus," see Acts 1:23, 18:17, Col. 4:11.

57. *Scholia* 360.7 (on DN 8 893A). An offhanded comment about a Dionysian peer could occasion from John a simple, unexplained reference, such as those regarding "the blessed Clement" (at *Scholia* 329.1 and 332.1); or no remark at all, as when Dionysius slips in a brief quotation from Ignatius of Antioch.

was older, the mentor, the more experienced in pagan learning or because we are all God's children.⁵⁸ The events implied and mentioned in the *Epistles* also receive attention from John. According to Letter Seven, Dionysius was with one Apollonphanes when he noted an eclipse, which he later learned shadowed the crucifixion of Jesus. Yet, he wrote Letter Ten to the Evangelist John on Patmos in exile under Domitian—a good sixty years after Tiberias and the crucifixion. Thus John calculates that Dionysius was a young man of twenty-five when Jesus died, long before he met Paul, and an old man of ninety when he wrote to John and prophesied his release.⁵⁹

All of these passages—honorific adjectives, links to Saint Paul, references to apostolic contemporaries—serve the positive function of reinforcing John's basic premise that these are the genuine works of the biblical Dionysius. We have long known from other contemporary witnesses that doubts were expressed early on, indeed among John's fellow Chalcedonians, regarding the authenticity of the CD.⁶⁰ Now we can also know how John handled those doubts, how he refuted a specific charge of forgery, and how all of this fits within the context of his christological disputations.

A specific charge of forgery stimulated John to comment on two texts. The *Celestial Hierarchy* refers to the Gentiles or the other nations "from whom we ourselves have come." This prompts John: "Note how the inopportune and indiscriminate ignorance of some is here fully silenced, those bold to say that these divine things are authored by Apollinaris, not among people who remember to regard the antiquity of the man, but who say that the naming of Dionysius is falsely-written. But he here says that he himself was converted from idolaters, and Apollinaris was never from them."⁶¹ Here John refutes a charge that the CD was another Apollinarian forgery. His defense assumes the veracity of the author's personal references, which "inopportune and bold" accusers could have considered as calculated falsehoods. There is, however, a second and more substantive refutation of the same accusation. The *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* rejects some errors about the afterlife, including the worldly pleasures of food. John condemns Papias by name and seizes this as another opportunity to discuss Apollinaris. "Apollinaris believed in this teaching (as is clear in his writings) which some call "chiliasm." How, therefore, could these writings of Saint Dionysius, writings which oppose Apollinaris, be by Apollinaris, according to the idiocies of some?"⁶² That

58. *Scholia* 48.7., with an interesting positive reference to Papias; compare *Scholia* 176.4.

59. *Scholia* 573.7 (on Ep 10 1117A). The practice of deacons and priests also shows the "antiquity of the father," according to *Scholia* 136.16.

60. The doubts were expressed by Hypatius of Ephesus in 532, according to Innocentius of Maronia. "Epistula de collatione cum Severianis habita," *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, E. Schwartz, ed., (Berlin, 1914), 4/2, p. 173.

61. *Scholia* 85.6 (on CH 9 260D). That Dionysius is "from the Greeks" is also noted at *Scholia* 32.2.

62. *Scholia* 176.4 (on EH 7 553C); compare *Scholia* 48.7. The whole of the passage is not found in Syr. but FA has the key parts.

“Dionysius” opposed what Apollinaris presumably taught about the afterlife is a more substantial refutation of Apollinarian authorship than the simple acceptance of the author’s word about a Gentile background.

These two passages from John’s *Scholion*, in conjunction with his *Prologue*, signal the first known defense of Dionysius’s authenticity over against another named author, Apollinaris of Laodicea. Since John was known for his skill in detecting Apollinarian forgeries, one can well imagine that his refutation would have carried some weight. As indeed it did: in the eighth century, Phocas bar Sergius, translator of the CD into Syriac, noted with approval the interpretive work of John as being useful for defending the authenticity of these writings over against charges that “they are not from the great teacher [Dionysius], but from one of the heretical Apollinarists or an unknown heretic of more recent times.”⁶³

Yet many questions remain. Were these bold and ignorant accusers perhaps some strictly dyophysite defenders of Chalcedon making a preemptive strike against a potential enemy? John is clearly out to argue that the CD is neither Apollinarian nor a forgery, the double accusation implied by the Chalcedonian Hypatius of Ephesus when he rejected the Severians’ invocation of Dionysius.⁶⁴ But why then did John not present his refutation of this charge in a scholion directly concerned with Christology? As we have seen, he took pains to distinguish the orthodox Christology of Dionysius from the heresy of Apollinaris. Yet he never used those occasions to voice his blunt rebuttal: how, then, are these texts by Apollinaris, according to the idiocies of some, which oppose the very Christology of Apollinaris?

At the same time, there are still many ambiguities about John’s purpose and procedure in promoting the CD. Although he appears to be sincerely persuaded of Dionysian authenticity, he was not innocent of literary deceit himself. His substantial use of Plotinus without acknowledgment makes the reader wonder whether he really had no idea that “Dionysius” had similarly used Proclus.⁶⁵ This takes the authorship issue beyond Apollinarian Christology and into a much broader horizon. Yet whatever else may eventually emerge from fuller analyses of the *Scholion*, perhaps even about the real author of the CD, we can learn from John’s comments some of the specifics about the first individual suspect in this endless search, Apollinaris of Laodicea, and how John of Scythopolis co-opted his Monophysite opponents’ apostolic witness for his own Neo-Chalcedonian program.

63. The passage cited is from Phocas’s still unpublished prologue to the CD, London BM 12152, fol. 5v, col. 1, lines 18–21.

64. See note 60 above.

65. On Plotinus in John, see note 8 above. Although von Balthasar seemed unaware of this use of Plotinus, he suspected that John only pretended to believe in Dionysian antiquity and may have known a great deal about the true authorship. See von Balthasar, “Das Problem der Dionysius-Scholien,” p. 680.