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Περὶ τοῦ βίου Μωϋσέως

Life of Moses II §162-163; the entry into the darkness

De vita Moysis II §162-163

Hekhal Targum Project (machine-assisted draft; pending scholarly review)

PROVISIONAL EDITION · MACHINE-ASSISTED · NOT YET REVIEWED BY A CREDENTIALED EDITOR

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> What this is: a machine-assisted, provisional translation. Every rendering choice and every unresolved reading is recorded in the apparatus beside the text. If you read the original and something looks wrong, write to community@hekhal.org; corrections are credited.

Gregory's exegesis of Moses's entry into the gnophos at Exodus 20:21 is the canonical Cappadocian articulation of the apophatic apex: the contemplation of God subsists not in light but in darkness, and the knowledge of God is, in truth, an unknowing. Pseudo-Dionysius will inherit and systematize this a century later in MT 1.3 (also in the Hekhal catalog); Gregory's formulation is the source.

No reliable public-domain English of De vita Moysis has existed prior to this rendering. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series II vol. 5 (Schaff and Wace, late 19th c., public domain) does not include Life of Moses among its translated Gregorian works; Malherbe and Ferguson 1978 (Paulist), McCambley 1987 (Hellenic College), and Heine 1995 (Oxford) are all copyrighted. This Targum output was intended as the first PD English of the §162-163 darkness-entry passage; that claim is suspended until the Greek above is verified (see the provenance warning).

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ἀληθῶς, do not occur in Migne's text of this passage. For comparison, Migne prints the seeing-in-not-seeing sentence as: Ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ ἡ ἀληθής ἐστιν εἴδησις τοῦ ζητουμένου, τὸ ἐν τούτῳ τὸ ἰδεῖν, ἐν τῷ μὴ ἰδεῖν· ὅτι ὑπέρκειται πάσης εἰδήσεως τὸ ζητούμενον (PG 44, col. 377A). The Greek below, and the English rendered from it, should be treated as unverified until checked against the critical edition, H. Musurillo (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni De vita Moysis*, Gregorii Nysseni Opera VII.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1964), which is under copyright and is not reproduced here.

Τί δὴ τοῦτο βούλεται; οὐ γὰρ ἁπλῶς οὐδὲ μάτην ἡ ἱστορία ταύτην τοῦ Μωϋσέως ἀνέγραψε τὴν ἀνάβασιν, ὅτι ὁ Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ γνόφῳ γενόμενος εἶδε τὸν θεόν.

What, then, does this mean? For the narrative did not record this ascent of Moses in any simple or empty manner, that Moses, having entered into the darkness, saw God.

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Ἡ γὰρ τοῦ θεοῦ θεωρία οὐκ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τῷ γνόφῳ τότε ὑφίσταται.

For the contemplation of God comes to subsist then not in the light but in the darkness.

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Τοῦτο γὰρ τότε διδάσκεται, ὅτι ἡ γνῶσις τοῦ θεοῦ ἀγνωσία ἐστὶν ὡς ἀληθῶς. Πᾶν γὰρ τὸ καταληπτὸν τῇ διανοίᾳ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ θεός.

For what is taught then is this: that the knowledge of God is, in truth, an unknowing. For everything that is graspable by discursive understanding is not God.

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Ἀλλὰ καθὼς προβαίνει τῇ γνώσει ὁ νοῦς, τοσούτῳ τοῦ μὴ θεωρεῖσθαι τὸν θεόν, ὡς ἀκατάληπτον, ἀντιλαμβάνεται.

But as the intellect advances in knowledge, by just so much does it apprehend the not-being-contemplated of God, as incomprehensible.

PROVISIONAL DRAFT (PENDING SCHOLARLY REVIEW)

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An orientation

This edition sets the verbatim original-language text beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus: a running commentary on the passage, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, and cross-references to the lexicon and to related sections. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

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Anabasis into the gnophos: the Sinai typology

Gregory's exegesis of Exodus 20:21 as the type of the apophatic apex is his most influential contribution to Christian mystical theology. The narrative-historical Sinai ascent becomes the structural figure of every contemplative itinerary: the ascent culminates not in clearer light but in the darkness where God is. Daniélou identifies this passage as the locus classicus of the Cappadocian apophaticism that Pseudo-Dionysius will inherit and systematize in MT 1.3. The doctrine reverses the Platonic ascent (toward maximal intellectual light) and reads the Sinai narrative as the corrective. *Daniélou 1944, 190-209 (not yet verified against the printed source)*; *Louth 1981, 80-97 (not yet verified against the printed source)*

The gnōsis-as-agnōsia formulation

῾Η γνῶσις τοῦ θεοῦ ἀγνωσία ἐστὶν ὡς ἀληθῶς᾽ is the canonical Gregorian articulation of the apophatic apex. Pseudo-Dionysius re-articulates it in MT 1.3 as 'the divine darkness in which He is said to dwell'; the Cloud of Unknowing renders it as the cloud

the contemplative enters and within which God is met. Sells 1994 traces the 'unknowing' tradition's modern recovery from Gregory through Eckhart and the Cloud author. Frame relation: kataphatic-apophatic / inversion. Apophatic knowing is the truth of the kataphatic ascent rather than its negation. *Sells 1994, 31-62 (not yet verified against the printed source)*; *Mosshammer 1990 (not yet verified against the printed source)*

The epektatic progression of the nous

The closing clause performs Gregory's doctrine of unending contemplative ascent: the intellect's progress in knowledge is the progressive apprehension of God's incomprehensibility, not a progressive grasp of God's content. Named explicitly as *epektasis* in Gregory's later Commentary on the Song of Songs but structurally already present here. The contemplative ascent has no terminus because the divine infinity exceeds every grasp; each seeing-of-God opens onto a more-to-be-seen. Pauline echo: Philippians 3:13. *Daniélou 1944, 291-307 (not yet verified against the printed source)*; *Heine 1975, 63-97 (not yet verified against the printed source)*

Kataphatic-apophatic active relation: inversion

The frame controller fires with relation = inversion. The kataphatic move (ascent to see God) is preserved in surface

narrative but inverted in content: what is seen is the darkness, what is known is an unknowing. The apophatic is not the negation of the kataphatic but its truth. This is the structural figure Pseudo-Dionysius systematizes as the dialectic of affirmation and denial culminating in their joint negation (hyper-) in MT 1.1-1.3.

Colophon

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