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Frontismatter, preface, table of contents.

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From Word to Silence
Vol. II

by Raoul Mortley

THEOPHANEIA

BEITRÄGE ZUR RELIGIONS- UND KIRCHENGESCHICHTE
DES ALTERTUMS

Begründet von Franz Joseph Dölger und Theodor Klauser,
in Verbindung mit dem F. J. Dölger-Institut
herausgegeben von Ernst Dassmann

31

From Word to Silence

II

The way of negation, Christian and Greek

by

Raoul Mortley



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to Silence

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Dedicated to my mentor
in the history of ideas,
M. Jean Pépin

Preface

This volume follows the first in that it attempts to draw together the threads which constitute the theme of the limits of discourse, and to examine its development in late antiquity.

As the transcendent emerged from the Platonist and Neopythagorean tradition, it encountered the monotheistic God of the Jews. The resulting synthesis dominates the Christian approach to discourse, and the Platonist follows its own lines.

Of the two, the Greek Platonists give the more thorough account of the negative way. The use of the negative to explore the transcendent properly belongs to Greek Neoplatonism: in Christianity it is never fully developed, and functions more as a modifier of discourse in its over-confident phase. These differences tend to dissolve, however, with the later Arian thinkers, and of course with the most crucial writer of all, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, with whom the most complete synthesis of the Greek and Christian negative way occurs.

This book is dedicated to Monsieur Jean Pépin. Over fifteen years of association with him has taught me an enormous amount, and I gratefully acknowledge this. I also thank my friend Michel Tardieu for many vigorous discussions; I have learnt much from him. To Joan Elder, who with unfailing courtesy and good humour typed this manuscript, go my sincere thanks also.

Raoul Mortley

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