

# Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite



*Ecclesiastical  
Hierarchy*



**Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite**

# **Ecclesiastical Hierarchy**



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Caput I

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Caput VI

To my Fellow Presbyter Timothy. Dionysius the Presbyter.

What is the traditional view of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy  
and what  
is its purpose?



# Section I

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We must, then, most pious of pious sons, demonstrate from the supermundane and most sacred Oracles and traditions, that ours is a

Hierarchy of the inspired and Divine and Deifying science, and of

operation, and of consecration, for those who have been initiated with

the initiation of the sacred revelation derived from the hierarchical

mysteries. See, however, that you do not put to scorn things most holy

(Holy of Holies); but rather treat them reverently, and you will honour

the things of the hidden God by intellectual and obscure researches,

carefully guarding them from the participation and defilement of the

uninitiated, and reverently sharing holy things with the holy alone, by

a holy enlightenment. For thus, as the Word of God has taught us who

feast at His Banquet, even Jesus Himself--the most supremely Divine

Mind and superessential, the Source and Essence, and most supremely

Divine Power of every Hierarchy and Sanctification and Divine operation--illuminates the blessed Beings who are superior to us, in a

manner more clear, and at the same time more intellectual, and

assimilates them to His own Light, as far as possible; and by our love

of things beautiful elevated to Him, and which elevates us, folds

together our many diversities, and after perfecting into a uniform and

Divine life and habit and operation, holily bequeaths the power of the

Divine Priesthood; from which by approaching to the holy exercise of

the priestly office, we ourselves become nearer to the Beings above us,

by assimilation, according to our power, to their abiding and:

unchangeable holy steadfastness; and thus by looking upwards to the

blessed and supremely Divine self of Jesus, and reverently gazing upon

whatever. we are permitted to see, and illuminated with the knowledge

of the visions, we shall be able to become, as regards the science of

Divine mysteries, purified and purifiers; images of Light, and workers,

with God, perfected and perfecting.

# Section II

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Then what is the Hierarchy of the Angels <sup>[1]</sup>and Archangels, and of supermundane Principalities and Authorities, Powers and Lordships, and Divine Thrones, or of the Beings of the same ranks as the Thrones--which the Word of God declares to be near, and always about God, and with<sup>[2]</sup> God, naming them in the Hebrew tongue Cherubim and Seraphim--by pondering the sacred ranks and divisions of their Orders and Hierarchies, you will find in the books we have written--not as befits their dignity but to the best of our ability--and as the Theology of the most holy Scriptures guided, when they extolled their Hierarchy. Nevertheless, it is necessary to say this, that both that, and every Hierarchy extolled now by us, has one and the same power, throughout the whole Hierarchical transaction; and that the Hierarchy himself, according to his essence, and analogy, and rank, is initiated in Divine things, and is deified and imparts to the subordinates, according to the meetness of each for the sacred deification which comes to him from God; also that the subordinates follow the superior, and elevate the inferior towards things in advance; and that some go before, and, as far as possible, give the lead to others; and that each, as far as may be, participates in the truly Beautiful, and Wise, and Good, through this the inspired and sacerdotal harmony.