Chapter 3

Ranks Are Not Bypassed; Rites Are Not Negated

The last two chapters looked at one half of the Dionysian corpus; this chapter turns to the other. This is to say its concern is not with the procession from God, the divine names that source intelligible properties to participating beings, but with the return to God, the hierarchical (“sacredly-ordered”) ranks and hierurgical (“sacredly-worked”) rituals that mediate and effect deification-union for practicing beings. But this said, this chapter will also consider the whole of the Dionysian corpus. For insofar as the Divine Names and Mystical Theology not only describe the divine-name procession from God but also prescribe a performative practice for returning to God through the removal of divine names (and perceptible symbols), this chapter argues that such a practice serves as a preparation

1. Hierurgy (“sacred work”) is Dionysius’ preferred term for what is usually (in late Neoplatonism) called theurgy (“divine work”)—divinely-established, ritualized practices that effect union with higher planes of reality; see EH 3.III.4, 429D and EH 3.III.12, 441C; see also Klitenic, “Theurgy”; Louth, “Pagan Theurgy”; and Rorem, Biblical and Liturgical Symbols. Theurgy is instead usually reserved for the divine acts of God (Jesus) that the hierurgical rituals imitate. But as with most things Dionysian, this usage is not always precise. Theurgy is sometimes employed to refer to any work that is divine in nature, whether performed by God (Jesus) or humans (see EH 2.II.7, 396D and EH 4.III.12, 484D; see also Struck, “Pagan and Christian Theurgies”; and Shaw, “Neoplatonic Theurgy”). And hierurgy is sometimes used to refer only to the sacramental rites of baptism, eucharist, and myron consecration, but other times used to refer more broadly to any “sacred work” undertaken by humans (in particular the non-sacramental rites of clerical ordination, monastic tonsure, and the rite for the dead). (Myron consecration refers to ritual anointing with sacred oil.)
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for and technique within the liturgical rituals of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Negative theology is not the means by which hierarchical ranks and hierurgical rituals are negated or abandoned; they are a means by which they are affirmed and accomplished.

Those that interpret the Dionysian corpus through the lens of apophatic abandonment see things differently, arguing that apophesis, in effect, trumps hierarchy and hierurgy—that the hierarchical ranks of angels and humans and the hierurgical rituals of baptism, eucharist, and myron consecration are an unnecessary or insufficient means of return. The “unnecessary” version of the argument insists that apophatic ascent, which culminates in union with God, bypasses all hierarchies, which serve not as ladders leading up to God but as beacons of divine glory. More radically, it proposes that Dionysian hierarchies and hierurgies are, even for Dionysius, just “useful means,” one among many different soteriologically efficacious but literally false religious paths. The “insufficient” version of the argument is a bit more nuanced, maintaining that although hierarchical ranks and hierurgical rituals are necessary to deification-union, they ultimately must be surpassed. Here, things go something as follows: the Dionysian corpus offers but one path of return, that of symbolic interpretation; just as the *Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology* advance a method for interpreting “symbols” for God, so do the *Celestial Hierarchy* and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* for the angels and liturgy. But, continues this argument, the Dionysian path of return culminates in the absolute negation of all symbols whatsoever; thus whereas the *Celestial Hierarchy* and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* interpret symbols for the angels and liturgy by “negating” their perceptible form to recover their intelligible content, the *Mystical Theology* “interprets” all symbols by negating not only their perceptible form but also their intelligible content. Thus, concludes this argument, although hierarchical ranks and hierurgical rituals play a necessary initial role in the process of return—al-

2. Here I have in mind the arguments of Andrew Louth (*Denys*, 108, 105). Note, though, that Louth does recognize the fundamentally “liturgical” nature of both the Dionysian corpus and Dionysian theology (ibid., 29–31); for more on this, see notes 73 and 87 below.

3. Here I refer once again to Denys Turner and John Hick, particularly the latter, for whom all “divine names”—a category that seems to include all religious beliefs and practices whatsoever—are just “useful means.” See note 1 in chapter 1 and note 4 in chapter 2.

4. Here I’m thinking of the work of Paul Rorem, in particular his books (*Biblical and Liturgical Symbols, Pseudo-Dionysius*), but also some of his articles (“The Place of The Mystical Theology,” “The Uplifting Spirituality,” and “Moses as the Paradigm”). See section III below for more on Rorem’s arguments and evidence.
beit more as interpreted than as performed—that role is one that requires their eventual negation, “not in further interpretation but in final rejection and abandonment.”

All this is apophatic abandonment— attempts to minimize the necessity and ultimacy of the hierarchies and hierurgies for return due to the conviction that if God is absolutely ineffable, then nothing can be literally true with respect to God, not even the hierurgical rituals that are revealed by and effect uplifting through the hierarchical ranks. Such rituals and ranks must therefore be just one among many different possible routes of access to God. And even if they are personally or communally useful, they must ultimately be kicked away like so many Wittgensteinian ladders that not only serve purely provisional purposes but also thwart higher spiritual aspirations.

Although such a Dionysius may well be in step with our times, he is at odds with his own writings. This chapter speaks on behalf of those writings, showing how they do not abandon all things hierarchical and hierurgical to apophasis, but rather regard negation as a means of properly preparing for and performing the rituals. In doing so, this chapter offers four distinct arguments. First, for every hierarchical rank of being after the first rank of angels, union with God is hierarchically mediated by, and therefore spiritually inferior to, the superior ranks of hierarchical beings. Second, for every ecclesiastical rank of being (i.e., humans), deification-union requires not only an understanding of all relevant symbols but also their actual ritual-communal practice (at least in cases where these symbols are liturgical-hierurgical in nature, as they are for humans). Third, proper understanding of liturgical symbols does not involve their negation but the recovery of their intelligible-spiritual meaning from their perceptible form. Fourth, if the two “halves” of the Dionysian corpus do fit together, they do so in such a way that aphairetic removal serves and supports hierurgical ritual rather than rejecting and abandoning it. And so, this chapter speaks on behalf of not only a “positively different” Dionysian corpus but also a positively different Dionysian God—a God who bestows hierarchical ranks, hierurgical rituals, and hierarchical-hierurgical symbols for the proportionate deification-union of humans; a God who calls for uplifting by these ranks, practice of these rituals, and interpretation of these symbols; a God who desires not the utter negation of these ranks, rituals, and symbols, but their proper religious use and interpretation.

5. Rorem, Pseudo-Dionysius, 206; see also 210–13.
I. Deification-Union is Hierarchically Mediated

In one sentence, the first and only sentence from *Celestial Hierarchy* 3.1, Dionysius tells us just about everything that we need to know about hierarchy.

According to me, hierarchy is sacred order (τάξις) and science (ἐπιστήμη) and activity (ἐνεργεία), being assimilated to the god-form as much as possible and being lifted up to the god-imitation in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it, while the god-becoming beauty—as simple, good, and source of initiation—is completely pure of every dissimilarity, giving its proper light to each according to worth, and perfecting in most divine sacrament (τελετή) each of those being harmoniously perfected according to the precise form.6

Here lie four key characteristics of hierarchy: (1) hierarchies are constituted by sacred orders, sciences, and activities; (2) they function to purify, illuminate, and perfect their members; (3) they do so to the end of uplifting to and assimilation with God; (4) and they achieve these functions to these ends in proportion to the hierarchical position or capacity of their members. I will venture no further than these four claims in this section, seeking to demonstrate the necessity of hierarchical mediation for deification-union.

A hierarchy is constituted by a sacred order (τάξις), science (ἐπιστήμη), and activity (ἐνεργεία). This is not as unhelpful as it may at first seem. Each hierarchy is a sacred order insofar as it possesses both a general triadic structure and a specific hierarchical type (celestial, human, or legal); a sacred science insofar as it enables a certain means of intellecting (νοēσις) divine matters (immaterial, ecclesiastical-symbolic, or legal-symbolic, respectively); and a sacred activity insofar as it employs a certain set of unifying-deifying practices (contemplative, Christic-sacramental, or Mosaic-legalistic, respectively).7

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6. *CH* 3.1, 164D. Note that two slightly different definitions of hierarchy can be found at *EH* 1.1, 369–372A and *EH* 1.3, 373C.

7. *EH* 5.1.2, 501A–504A.
Table 4: Hierarchical Orders, Sciences, and Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sacred Order</th>
<th>Sacred Science</th>
<th>Sacred Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Celestial Hierarchy</strong></td>
<td>1st rank: seraphim, cherubim, thrones</td>
<td>Immaterial (unsymbolic) intellection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd rank: dominions, powers, authorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd rank: archons, archangels, angels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Hierarchy</strong></td>
<td>1st rank: baptism, eucharist, myron</td>
<td>Intellection through material-ecclesiastical symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd rank: hierarchs, priests, deacons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd rank: monks, sacred people, those undergoing purification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal Hierarchy</strong></td>
<td>1st rank: law of the sacred tabernacle</td>
<td>Intellection through material-legal symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd rank: Moses and priests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd rank: people</td>
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Thus the celestial hierarchy is composed of three ranks (*diakosmeis*) of angels, each of which is populated by three distinct orders (*taxeis*): a superior rank of the orders of seraphim, cherubim, and thrones; an intermediate rank of the orders of dominions, powers, and authorities; and an inferior rank of the orders of archons, archangels, and angels.\(^8\) And the celestial hierarchy intellects divine matters directly, thereby requiring no perceptible symbols or material rituals.\(^9\) The human hierarchy,\(^10\) by contrast, is heterogeneous.

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8. *CH* 6.2, 200D–201A. As Sheldon-Williams observed, Dionysius is not entirely consistent in his application of the terms *ranks* (*diakosmeis*) and *orders* (*taxeis*) (“The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,” 295–96).

9. *EH* 1.4, 376B.

10. If, as is widely believed, the titles and subtitles of the Dionysian corpus are later editorial additions, then it is the case that Dionysius never refers to the “ecclesiastical hierarchy” as such, preferring instead to call it, usually, “our hierarchy” and, less frequently, “human hierarchies” or “the hierarchy among us” or “our most pious hierarchy” or “the orders of the ranks here and now” (Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols*, 28 n. 6). But since *ecclesiastical hierarchy* is the widely accepted name of the hierarchy described in
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in nature, composed of one rank of ecclesiastical rituals and two ranks of ecclesiastical roles—the first rank is constituted by the sacramental rituals of baptism, eucharist, and myron consecration, whereas the remaining two ranks are populated by a superior clerical rank of hierarchs, priests, and deacons, and an inferior lay rank of monks, sacred people, and those being purified (the last of which is further trichotomized into the sub-orders of catechumens, penitents, and possessed). Unlike the superior celestial hierarchy, the human hierarchy intellects divine matters through perceptible symbols and material rituals; but unlike the inferior legal hierarchy, these christological-sacramental symbols and rituals are entirely “precise” and therefore completely “appropriate” to this end. Finally, the legal hierarchy—which, with the coming of Jesus, gets supplanted by the ecclesiastical hierarchy—permits a merely faint and obscure intellection of divine matters through the symbols and rituals of the Mosaic “law of the sacred tabernacle.”

As Dionysian scholars have long noted, there are some obvious problems with the parallelism employed here. Whereas the celestial hierarchy is composed of three ranks of three orders of beings, the ecclesiastical and legal hierarchies are populated by both beings and sacraments. Thus when Dionysius tries to trace the blueprint of the ecclesiastical hierarchy—three types of sacraments, three types of beings who initiate, three types of beings who are initiated—onto the other hierarchies, he not only distorts the celestial hierarchy (which has no sacraments, at least not in the Celestial Hierarchy) but also overcomplicates the legal hierarchy (which appears

the treatise Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, I will employ it interchangeably with our hierarchy and human hierarchy.

11. Although the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy explicates six ecclesiastical rituals in total, only these three are called sacraments (teletē) and numbered among the first rank of the human hierarchy. (The other three, non-sacramental rituals are clerical ordination, monastic tonsure, and the rite for the dead.) But, again, this usage is not precise, as Dionysius refers to the deifying-unifying practices of both the celestial and legal hierarchies as sacramental in EH 5.I.2.

12. EH 2.III.6, 401C; EH 2.III.1, 397AB; EH 2.III.7, 404B. For more on the precision and appropriateness of the ecclesiastical symbols-rituals, see section III.

13. EH 5.I.2, 501C.

14. Whether such intellection is possible at all is debatable. My contention is that it is, albeit faintly: EH 5.I.2 asserts that the sacrament of the legal hierarchy is elevation to spiritual worship and that the initiated of the legal hierarchy are those being conducted to a more perfect initiation of the symbols of the law.

15. In the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy Dionysius calls the sacrament of the celestial hierarchy “immaterial knowledge of God and divine things” (EH 1.I.501A). But there is no
not to have distinct orders within its ranks). And the same holds true of the hierarchical functions of purification, illumination, and perfection: Dionysius would like it to be the case that the three orders (sacraments) of the first rank are the agents of perfection, illumination, and purification, respectively; that the three orders (initiators) of the second rank are the administrators of these agents of perfection, illumination, and purification, respectively; and that the three orders (initiated) of the third rank are administered respectively by these agents of perfection, illumination, and purification. But this not only assumes that the celestial and legal hierarchies share the same type of “sacred order” as the human hierarchy, but also fudges at least one detail of the human hierarchy—viz., baptism serves both to purify and illuminate, whereas both myron consecration and eucharist serve to perfect. As one Dionysian scholar has noted, it is therefore the case that Dionysius’ “claims for a single structure common to all three hierarchies are rather forced.” (As an aside, let me again say here that the lengths to which Dionysius goes in order to “force” triplicate structures in the hierarchies is reason to look for triplicate structures among the divine names—see chapter 2, section II.) Nevertheless, it is also the case that just as hierarchies possess the constituents of order, science, and activity, they likewise possess the functions of purification, illumination, and perfection. Moreover, as the above passage from Celestial Hierarchy 3.1 suggests, these functions and constituents are correlated. Purification removes the divine dissimilarity that comes from being out of hierarchical order; illumination imparts enlightenment and thereby enables scientific intellection of divine matters; and perfection bestows divine imitation and union through the correct performance and intellection of a hierarchy’s hierurgical practices. These features, then, are common to every hierarchy: the constituents evidence of this in the Celestial Hierarchy. Moreover, its addition to the celestial hierarchy upsets its triadic-triadic organization, giving it an unseemly total of ten types of entities.

16. EH 5.I.1, 501A; EH 5.I.2, 501ABCD; EH 5.III.8, 516A.
17. EH 5.I.3, 504BC; EH 3.I, 425AB. As Dionysius freely admits, it is also a stretch to say that any member of the celestial hierarchy is undergoing purification (EH 6.III.6; see also CH 7.2, 208A–209A).
19. CH 3.2, 165BC; CH 3.3, 165D–168A. Note that these three constituents and functions of hierarchy also correspond to the Neoplatonic triad of remaining, proceeding, and reverting: hierarchical order or purity is the static remaining of hierarchy, hierarchical science or illumination is the dynamic procession of enlightenment down through the hierarchical ranks, and hierarchical activity or perfection is the uplifting reversion of souls through the hierarchical ranks. For more on purification, illumination, and
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of sacred order, science, and activity; and the functions of purification, illumination, and perfection.

These constituents and functions are for the sake of the ultimate ends of hierarchy—return, uplifting, salvation, assimilation, divinization, union. Although there are some differences between these terms that will be noted below (section IV), for now allow them to stand as different terms for the same general Neoplatonic process of return (epistrophē), the process by which humans ascend from lower to higher, inferior to superior, diverse to simple. This goal, as Dionysius makes clear in the passages below, can only be realized through hierarchy. Thus both Celestial Hierarchy 3.2 and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 2.I inform us that the goal of hierarchy is assimilation and union with God as much as possible. And, to this, Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 2.I adds that humans will only be assimilated and unified with God by their love and hierurgical practice of the commandments.

And so the aim of hierarchy is the assimilation (ἄφοροιοσίς) and union (ἐνωσίς) with God, as much as possible, having God leading all sacred knowledge and activity, and steadfastly seeing and having impressed the divine comeliness of God as much as possible, and perfecting the divine image of each member as most clear and spotless mirrors, receptive of the source-light and thearchic ray and sacredly filled with the given radiance, and ungrudgingly spreading this light again in sequence in accordance with the thearchic law.

Therefore, we have sacredly said that this is the goal of our hierarchy: our assimilation (ἄφοροιοσίς) and union (ἐνωσίς) with God as much as possible. But, as the divine Scriptures teach, we will only perfection in general, see the following: CH 7.2, 208A–209A; CH 7.3, 209CD; CH 10.3, 273C; EH 5.I.3, 504AB–5.1.7, 509A; EH 6, 532A–533A; EH 6, 537ABC. As several Dionysian scholars have noted, all three are dominated by an intellective element. In the words of two such scholars, purification frees the intelligence of everything other than God, illumination reveals God, transmitting the science of God and divine things, and perfection is characterized by the ability to contemplate the sacred mysteries (see, for example, Wear and Dillon, Dionysius the Areopagite, 62). Still, this is not to say that such contemplation is effective apart from the actual practice of the sacraments.

20. Rorem, Biblical and Liturgical Symbols, 99. In fact, the last passage quoted in this paragraph practically equates salvation, divinization, assimilation, and union (EH 1.3, 373D–376A; see also EH 2.II.1, 393A); and a great number of passages use return and uplifting interchangeably (e.g., CH 9.2, 260B and CH 15.1, 333B).

21. CH 3.2, 165A. In addition to the passages below, see the following for the importance of hierarchy to salvation-union: CH 1.2, 121ABC; CH 1.3, 121C–124A; CH 7.2, 208A.
be made this by the affections and hierurgies (ἰερουργίαις) of the most august commandments.\textsuperscript{22}

Similarly, both Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 1.4 and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 1.3 tell us that hierarchy is a gift from God to rational and intelligible beings for their salvation and deification (the latter of which involves an assimilation and unification with God as far as possible). And Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 1.3 adds that this salvation is possible in no other way than by the deification of the saved through the assimilation and unification with God (as far as possible).

And so, let us say that the thearchic beatitude, the divine by nature, the source of deification (θεώσεις), from which those deified are deified, gave, by divine goodness, the gift of hierarchy to all rational and intelligent beings for their salvation and deification (θεώσει).\textsuperscript{23}

The will of this most thearchic beatitude beyond all, this threefold monad and really being, which is inscrutable to us but known to itself, is the rational salvation of beings like us and hyper us. But this salvation cannot otherwise happen except that those who are being saved are being deified. And this deification (θέωσις) is the assimilation (ἀφομοίωσις) and unification (ἐνωσις) with God so far as possible. And this is the common end of every hierarchy—the immediate love of God and divine things, hierurgified (ἰερουργουμένη) in an inspired and uniform manner; and prior to this, the complete and unswerving removal of things contrary, the knowledge of beings as they really are, the vision and science of sacred truth, the inspired participation in the uniform perfection, the banquet of contemplation of the One itself as far as possible, which nourishes intelligibly and deifies all who are lifted up toward it.\textsuperscript{24}

Hierarchy, we might therefore say, is both the necessary and sufficient condition of deification-union. As I will argue in the remainder of this section, this is to say that there is no deification-union that is not hierarchical—no deification-union that either bypasses or is disproportionate to hierarchical order. And as I will argue in the following two sections, this is also to say that deification-union requires nothing more than hierarchy—nothing more than the correct practice and interpretation of the hierarchical-hierurgical rites, not their negation and transcendence.

\textsuperscript{22}EH 2.1, 392A.
\textsuperscript{23}EH 1.4, 376B.
\textsuperscript{24}EH 1.3, 373D–376A.
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There is no deification-union that bypasses correct hierarchical order (i.e., purification). Such order is, quite simply, one in which superior hierarchical members preside over, pass down enlightenment to, and uplift inferior hierarchical members. Each member of the celestial hierarchy must be uplifted by an adjacently superior member of the celestial hierarchy (with the sole exception of the highest members of the celestial hierarchy, the seraphim, which are uplifted directly by Jesus).25 And each member of the human hierarchy must be uplifted by a superior member of the human hierarchy (with the sole exception of the highest members of the human hierarchy, the hierarchs, who are uplifted by the lowest member of the celestial hierarchy, the angels).26 Thus Celestial Hierarchy 9.2 says that the first rank of angels uplifts the second, which in turn uplifts the third, all so that “uplifting and reversion and communion and union to God might be according to order.”

One must consider, as has been said, that the superior rank, as drawing near in the manner of the first rank to that which is hidden, hiddenly hierarchizes the second, while the second, which is composed of holy dominions and powers and authorities, leads the hierarchy of the archons and archangels and angels more clearly than the first hierarchy but more hiddenly than that after it, and the revealing rank of archons and archangels and angels presides through one another over the human hierarchies, so that the uplifting and reversion and communion and union to God might be according to order, and indeed also so that the procession from God [might be] beneficently given to all the hierarchies and communally manifested with most sacred order.27

25. For uplifting within the celestial hierarchy, see the following: CH 5, 196C; CH 7.3, 209AB; CH 8.1, 204B; CH 8.2, 240C–241D; CH 9.2, 257CD; CH 10.1, 272D–273A; CH 10.2, 273AB; CH 13.3, 301A–304B; CH 13.4, 305B–308B; CH 15.6, 333C–336B; EH 5.1.2, 501AB; EH 6.III.6, 537BC; DN 11.1, 949A. For uplifting of the angels by Jesus, see the following: CH 7.3, 209BCD; EH 1.1, 372AB. For passages that discuss Jesus’ various hierarchical roles, see the following: CH 4.4, 181D; CH 7.3, 209B; EH 1.1, 372AB; EH 1.2, 373B; EH 5.1.5, 505B. Note also that the entire process of uplifting is enabled by God (CH 1.2, 121ABC; EH 1.3, 373C–376A).

26. For uplifting within the human hierarchy, see the following: EH 1.2, 372C–373B; EH 1.5, 376D; EH 2.III.3, 400B; EH 2.III.4, 400C; EH 3.III.12, 441C–444B; EH 6.III.1, 533C; EP 8.1, 1089A. And for uplifting of humans by angels, see the following: CH 4.3, 180C–181A; CH 4.4, 181BC; CH 5, 196C; CH 7.4, 212ABCD; CH 8.2, 241C; CH 9.2, 257C–260B; CH 10.1, 273A; CH 10.2, 273AB; CH 13.3, 301C; CH 13.4, 304B–308B; EH 1.2, 373A; DN 4.1, 696A; DN 4.2, 696C.

27. CH 9.2, 260AB. See also the passages two notes above.
And Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 1.2 applies this basic mechanism to the human hierarchy, telling how the human hierarch passes down his deification to inferior members of the hierarchy.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to say this, that both that hierarchy and every hierarchy hymned now by us has one and the same power throughout the whole of its hierarchical operation; and that the hierarch himself, according to his nature and aptitude and rank, is initiated in divine things, and is deified, and imparts to the subordinates, according to the merits of each, a share of the sacred deification received by him from God; and that the subordinates follow their superiors, who lift up the inferiors toward that which is in front, some of whom go forward and lead others on as far as possible; and that through this inspired and hierarchical harmony, each participates in the truly beautiful and wise and good, so far as possible.28

And Celestial Hierarchy 10.1 shows how the third rank of the angels uplifts the human hierarchy to God in accordance with the law of well-ordered hierarchical regularity.

We have concluded, then, that the most primordial rank of the minds around God, hierarchicalized by the perfecting illumination through its immediate elevation to it, is purified and illuminated and perfected by a gift of light from the thearchy that is both more hidden and more manifest—more hidden, as more intelligible, more simplifying, and more unifying; more manifest, as first gift, first manifestation, more complete, and more clearly poured out from it. And from this [first rank] again, in due degree, the second, and from the second, the third, and from the third, our hierarchy, is hierarchically uplifted, in divine harmony and proportion, to the hyper-source source and consummation of all good order in accordance with the law itself of the well-ordered source of order.29

28. EH 1.2, 372C–373A. See also the passages two notes above.

29. CH 10.1, 272D–273A. See also the passage three notes above. Note that the first order of celestial beings is here said to be “purified and illuminated and perfected by a gift of light from the thearchy that is both more hidden and more manifest”—the former, since it is more intelligible, simplifying, and unifying; the latter, since it is a first gift that is more completely and clearly poured out. Note also that the prior passage from CH 9.2 suggests that, whereas the first order of celestial beings “hiddenly hierarchicalizes” the second, the second hierarchicalizes the third in a manner that is less hidden. I don’t think this is to say that there is “a dialectic of hiddenness and revelation in the celestial hierarchy” (as one anonymous reviewer suggested), at least not if this implies an inverse
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Not only is there no deification-union outside of correct hierarchical order; there is also no deification-union that is not proportionate to correct hierarchical order. The angelic hierarchy in general enjoys a deification-union superior to that of the human hierarchy. And only the first rank of the angelic hierarchy—the seraphim, cherubim, and thrones—participate immediately in God; all other hierarchical beings can only return to God through intermediary beings in the hierarchy. Accordingly, Celestial Hierarchy 6.2 says that the first rank of angels is united to God more closely and immediately than any other being.

Theology has designated the whole heavenly beings as nine with nine revealed names; our divine sacred-initiator divides them into three threefold-orders. He says that first is that which is always around God, declared by tradition to be united closely and immediately to him before all the others. For he says that the revelation of the Holy Scriptures declares that the most holy thrones as well as the many-eyed and many-winged hosts, which are named cherubim and seraphim in the Hebrew tongue, are established immediately around God with a nearness superior to all. And so our illustrious guide spoke of this threefold order as one and of equal rank and really first hierarchy, than which there is not another more godlike or immediately proximate to the earliest illuminations of the thearchy. But he says that which is composed of the authorities, and lordships, and powers is second; and, as regards
the last of the heavenly hierarchies, the order of the angels and archangels and principalities is third.\textsuperscript{30}

And \textit{Ecclesiastical Hierarchy} 1.2 indicates that the human hierarchy in general enjoys a participation in God that is inferior to that of the celestial hierarchy.

But the beings and orders \textit{hyper} us, of whom we have already made sacred mention, are incorporeal, and their hierarchy is intelligible and \textit{hyper}-cosmic, but let us view our hierarchy, comfortably to ourselves, abounding in the variety of perceptible symbols, by which we are hierarchically lifted up, in proportion to our capacity, toward the uniform deification, God and divine virtue. They, as minds, intellect according to the laws for them, but we are lifted up by perceptible images toward divine contemplations as much as possible. And to speak truly, there is one to whom all the uniform aspire, but they do not participate uniformly of this that is one and the same, but as the divine measure distributes to each according to merited inheritance.\textsuperscript{31}

And \textit{Celestial Hierarchy} 8.2 maintains that it is divinely ordained by law that inferiors participate in God through superiors and therefore less perfectly.

For, as those who are skillful in our sacred sacraments say, the directly revealed fullness of divine things is more perfecting than the divine contemplations imparted through others, and so, I think, the immediate participation of the angelic ranks firstly elevated to God is more direct than that of those perfected through a mediator. Hence, by our hierarchical tradition, the first minds are named perfecting and illuminating and purifying powers of their subordinates, who are uplifted through them to the \textit{hyper}-being source of all, and come to participate, as far as permissible to them, in the purifications and illuminations and perfections of the source of perfection in accordance with the divine law. For this has been divinely ordained by law absolutely by the divine source of order: through the first, the second participate in the thearchic illuminations. You will find that this has been declared frequently by the theologians.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30}. \textit{CH} 6.2, 200D–201A. In addition to the passage below, see the following: \textit{CH} 4.2, 180A; \textit{CH} 5, 196C; all of \textit{CH} 7; \textit{CH} 10.1, 272D; \textit{CH} 12.2, 292C–293A; \textit{CH} 13.3, 301D–304A; \textit{EH} 1.2, 372C–375A; \textit{EH} 3.III.6, 432CD; \textit{EH} 4.III.5, 480BC; \textit{EH} 5.I.2, 501AB; \textit{EH} 6.III.6, 537BC.

\textsuperscript{31}. \textit{EH} 1.2, 373AB.

\textsuperscript{32}. \textit{CH} 8.2, 240CD. For Eric Perl, hierarchical participation in God is nevertheless
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In fact, Dionysius repeatedly tells the reader that all of this—the necessity of hierarchical uplifting, the importance of hierarchical position, the degree of hierarchical union—is divine law.

But the theology wisely teaches this also—that it came to us through angels, as though the divine regulation were laying down this rule, that through the first, the second are brought to the divine things. For not only with regard to the superior and inferior minds, but even for those of the same rank, this law has been established by the hyper-being order-source, that within each hierarchy there are first and middle and last orders and powers, and that the more divine are initiators and conductors of the less to the divine access and illumination and communion.33

It is the all-sacred law of the thearchy that through the first, the second are uplifted to its most divine light. Do we not see the perceptible substances of the elements first approaching that which is more akin to themselves and through these diffusing their own energy to others? Naturally, then, the source and foundation of all good order, both visible and invisible, permits its theurgifying rays to approach the more godlike first and through them, as more translucent minds that are more properly adapted to the reception and transmission of light, to shine out and proportionately illumine their subordinates. And so it is of these, the first contemplators of God, to teach ungrudgingly and in due measure the divine visions reverently gazed upon by themselves to those of second rank, and to initiate them in hierarchical matters (since they have been abundantly initiated with a perfecting science in all divine matters relating to their own hierarchy and have received the perfecting power of initiation), and to impart sacred gifts according to fitness (since they scientifically and wholly participate in the hierarchic perfection).34

By divine law, then, there is no deification-union without hierarchic mediation—no deification-union that bypasses hierarchic uplifting, no deification-union that is disproportionate to hierarchical position.

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33. CH 4.3, 181A. See also DN 4.1, 696A; CH 3.2, 165A; CH 8.2, 240D; CH 10.1, 273A.

34. EH 5.I.4, 504C–505A.