

The treatment of matter and divinisation language in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of pseudo-Dionysius and his sources, as a basis for evaluating his sacramental theology.

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## Abstract

The scant ancient references to Dionysius the Areopagite are introduced, together with the issue of pseudonymity and some theories of possible authorial objective. A procedure is set out for an investigation into the relationships between *Corpus Dionysiacum* and those works that secure its pseudonymous character, especially in terms of ritual, divinisation, and the liturgical rites of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, with a view to evaluating their contribution to sacramental theology.

The survey of literature in Chapter 2 sets the context for *CD* with brief accounts of the Monophysite controversy - in which the works first appeared - and the issues that secure modern theories of their historical provenance. The background of Christian/pagan antagonism is reviewed, and the main arguments of modern critics examined. Issues that continue to impinge on contemporary theology are suggested, including problematic anthropology and the quasi-religious nature of western consumer culture.

The investigation continues in Chapter 3 with a comparison between the views of Denys and his pagan sources on the soteriological relevance of matter. Through observing his manner of dealing with the more dualist aspects of his sources, and the extent to which his Christian confession modifies them, it is hoped for some preliminary indications concerning his purpose.

The intention of Chapter 4 is to explore key elements in the development of the language of divinisation, theurgy and *theôria*, and to suggest ways in which they operate within Denys' liturgical system. A more thorough analysis of the *EH* rites is then undertaken in Chapter 5, comparisons with other ancient liturgies being used to develop a basis for scrutinising the use of divinisation language from within the rites of *EH*.

In conclusion, Chapter 6 sets out a summary and evaluation of the findings concerning Denys' sacramental theology. Elements of contemporary theological relevance are suggested and briefly explored.

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## **Abbreviations**

<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>AWRI</i>	<i>The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation</i>
<i>CD</i>	<i>Corpus Dionysiacum (2 vols)</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>The Celestial Hierarchy</i>
<i>DBI</i>	<i>A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>De Myst</i>	<i>De Mysteriis</i>
<i>DN</i>	<i>The Divine Names</i>
<i>EEC</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Early Christianity</i>
<i>EH</i>	<i>The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LXX</i>	<i>Septuaginta</i>
<i>MHRA</i>	<i>Modern Humanities Research Association</i>
<i>MTh</i>	<i>The Mystical Theology</i>
<i>NE</i>	<i>Nichomachean Ethics</i>
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>NRSV</i>	<i>The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible</i>
<i>ODCC</i>	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church</i>
<i>RCIA</i>	<i>(Roman Catholic) Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i>
<i>RSV</i>	<i>The Revised Standard Version of the Bible</i>