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“HEAVENLY THEOLOGIANS”: THE PLACE OF ANGELS IN THE THEOLOGY OF MARTIN LUTHER

by

Christopher J. Samuel

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT
"HEAVENLY THEOLOGIANS": THE PLACE OF ANGELS IN THE THEOLOGY OF MARTIN LUTHER

Christopher J. Samuel

Marquette University, 2014

This dissertation examines a virtually untouched aspect of Martin Luther's theology: his angelology. Specifically, it argues four main points: that Luther does, over his corpus, present an angelology; that his angelology is indebted to and in conversation with the prior theological tradition; that his concern with the angels is evident throughout his career; and that his major angelological concerns are pastoral in nature. Furthermore, it presents Luther's answers to four basic angelological questions: 1) what are the angels?; 2) what is the angels' role in Creation?; 3) what is the nature of their relationship with humanity?; and 4) what is the nature of their relationship with the church?

The first step taken is to present a brief survey of Luther's angelological context by examining the works of Augustine of Hippo, John Chrysostom, Pseudo-Dionysius, Peter Lombard, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and Gabriel Biel, and to offer evidence of their influence on Luther on this specific topic. Their answers to these same angelological questions are then discussed.

Luther's answers to these questions are then examined, organized according to different periods in his life: Pre-1526, 1526-1535, and 1536-1545. One major text from each period is singled out for closer examination: his *Lectures on Hebrews*, *Lectures on Zechariah,* and *Lectures on Genesis*. In doing so, this dissertation shows that Luther's angelology can provide major insight into other areas of his overall theology, such as his ontology, cosmology, eschatology, and ecclesiology, but also that his angelology reveals his immersion in the theology of both the early and medieval churches – and is therefore a subject worthy of further exploration.

"… how hard it is for us to believe, though the good news was preached and sung for us by angels, who are heavenly theologians and have rejoiced in our behalf! Their song is the most glorious. It contains the whole Christian faith. For the *gloria in excelsis* is supreme worship. They wish us such worship and they bring it to us in Christ.
Ever since the fall of Adam the world knows neither God nor his creation. It lives altogether outside of the glory of God. … For this reason the angels here [in the Christmas story] recall fallen men to faith and love, that is, to glory towards God and peace on earth."[1]

[1] LW 54.327.#4201

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Christopher J. Samuel

For me, writing a dissertation has been a paradoxical task. On the one hand, writing and researching day after day, week after week, constantly thinking, constantly worrying over every argument and every word or what is left to be done can only be done by the author of the work. On the other hand – the more accurate hand – the dissertation writing process has made me increasingly aware of just how many people have shared this journey with me, and thankful for their unconditional presence and support of me and my task.

And so, I would first like to thank my friends and colleagues in the Theology department at Marquette University for the opportunity to talk, commiserate, vent, and laugh with each of them.

Next, I would like to thank my family for their continuing encouragement and love, not only during my time at Marquette, but throughout my academic career.

I must also thank my board members for their charity in agreeing to read and comment on my dissertation, and for their guidance at its inception. I would especially like to thank my advisor, Mickey L. Mattox, who has been a source of calm, unwavering support and encouragement, and has been invaluable to me as an instructor and mentor.

Lastly, I must thank my wife Laura. I truly and literally could not have done this without her unfailing, unconditional, unending love and support. Luther himself preached that, "… over and above all [other loves] is married love, that is, a bride's love, which glows like a fire and desires nothing but the husband. She says, 'It is you I want, not what

is yours: I want neither your silver nor your gold; I want neither. I want only you. I want you in your entirety, or not at all.' All other kinds of love seeks something other than the loved on: this kind wants only to have the beloved's own self completely."[1] She has shown me this kind of love every minute of our life together, and I can think of no other blessing I cherish more. Nor can I think of any other thing that has so comforted me and completed me as she does. She is my angel, in every way that matters.

[1] LW 44.9.

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"Rationalistically influenced thinkers hear Luther say that purified Christianity rightly has eliminated angelology and this type of thinking invites him to be the honorary president of the association. Rather, what Luther wanted to say is that the angels who surround Christ, the Lord of our cosmos, certainly do not want to be worshipped, but are acting as sub-leaders in invisible realms and, as such, are indispensable for the management of the visible realm in which we move. The fact that such a view of the matter cannot be accepted in theological circles requires a broader and more profound discussion. We stand here before the fact that 'religious supernaturalism' is regarded with skepticism or is summarily rejected by much critical research."[1]

— Bengt R. Hoffman, *Theology of the Heart*

Introduction: "Does Luther have an angelology?"

When considering the question of the angelology of the Reformation, much of scholarship has resoundingly answered with its own question: what is the point? The Reformers were clearly unconcerned with such matters. And thus, we read comments such as this in all manner of treatments of angelology:

> "Luther and Calvin illustrate plainly the fact that Reformed theologians had little incentive to inquire into any perhaps benign, non-human mysteries of the invisible world … on the whole for Protestants, the angels' post-biblical functions paled before the importance to God of humanity's struggle against the Devil to achieve divine identity as the elect of Christ."[2]

Or this:

> "By and large, we find comparatively little inclination in the mainstream of classical Reformation thought to deal with angels at all. … when we do find them noticed we rarely find them discussed at any length unless … with a caution against misuse of the concept."[3]

Why might this be the prevailing perspective? One likely, simple reason, as Euan Cameron points out, is that few if any of the Reformers actually, "took the time and

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[1] Bengt R. Hoffman, *Theology of the Heart: The Role of Mysticism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Minneapolis, MN: Kirk House Publishers, 1998), 36.
[2] Rosemary Guiley, *Encyclopedia of Angels* (New York: Facts on File/Checkmark Books, 2004), 163.
[3] Geddes MacGregor, *Angels: Ministers of Grace* (New York: Paragon House, 1988), 83.

trouble to construct a systematic angelology."[4] Luther in particular is troublesome, because — in contrast to, say, John Calvin[5] — his thoughts on angels are scattered throughout his entire corpus. Consequently, given that he apparently felt they were only incidental to larger topics, Luther was only "mildly interested," in them.[6]

If this is true, why should Luther's angelology be explored? Because in it, we find a subject that fully captures the tension between the antecedent theological tradition in which Luther was formed and the theological landscape within which he found himself after he withdrew from the confines of the Roman church. Moreover, we have in angelology a subject that bridges a gap between competing theories as to how Luther's life and legacy are to be understood.

In general, such scholarly discussions tend to begin with one of two different, almost diametrically opposed conclusions regarding Luther's ultimate role on the wider historical stage. The first perspective is the oldest, by a few decades: that Luther was the first great modern theologian (perhaps even the first great modern thinker), who cast off all of the accumulated and unnecessary detritus that the Church had become weighed down with over the course of its approximately 1500 year existence. These scholars tend to treat angels and angelology as one of the dispensables of which Luther was forced to dispose, in his pruning of (particularly medieval) obsessions and excesses. In other

---

[4] Euan Cameron, "Angels, Demons, and Everything in Between: Spiritual Beings in Early Modern Europe," in *Angels of Light?: Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Clare Copeland and Jan Machielsen (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 33.

[5] Since the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was itself Calvin's formulation of a systematic theology, we can find a theory of angels in Book I, Chapter 14, as Cameron mentions ("Angels," 33.) For this reason, when scholars mention Reformation angelology, Calvin is often called upon as a primary example. See also, Laura Sangha, *Angels and Belief in England, 1480-1700* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 41-78, where Calvin is featured as a major influence on the angelology of the place and time. Joad Raymond makes a similar comment in *Milton's Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 36.

[6] Raymond, *Milton's Angels*, 35.

words, "angels had been badly compromised by their collaboration with many of the worst excesses of the late medieval devotional regime."[7] Thus, when such scholars encounter Luther discussing angels in a text, they tend to interpret his comments as actually addressing something else, and delve into what about which Luther was 'really' talking.

The other, competing assumption is that Luther was the last great medieval theologian and thinker, that he was fully and inescapably immersed in the theological suppositions and world-view that shaped his formation and context. Thus, angels and angelology become merely another facet of Luther's theological upbringing and growth. And when Luther speaks of angels, the scholars that make this assumption tend to decide that his thoughts are merely artifacts of his training and his context, which, even if he was conscious of their irrelevance, he would be incapable of completely purging from his theology. As Raymond articulates it, this position maintains that the general belief in angels was so deeply seated in the Reformers' theological consciousness that they could not dismissed completely — to say nothing of the plain fact of the many references to angels in the Bible, which every exegete would necessarily be forced to address.[8]

Yet what links these two perspectives together is that they minimize any sort of angelological language or teaching in Luther's thought, explaining it away as something else: they are reductionistic. After all, he could not possibly be talking about *angels*, could he? This entire dissertation, therefore, is really my asking and considering this question: what if Luther really *is* talking about angels? What if, when he says 'angel,' he

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[7] Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham, *Angels in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13. Cf.

[8] Joad Raymond, ed. *Conversations with Angels: Essays Towards a History of Spiritual Communication, 1100-1700* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 14. Cf. Robert H. West, *Milton and the Angels* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1955), 12-15.

really does mean powerful, intelligent, passionate spirits, who are the messengers and minions of God at work in Creation?

Int.1. Literature Review

Despite the dire picture I have painted above, the topic of Luther's angelology has been touched on by scholars in the past few years. Nevertheless, these treatments are not only brief — being articles or chapter sections, after all — but also tend to fall into one of the two scholarly camps described above: either they attempt to explain away Luther's thoughts by delving into what Luther 'really' meant when discussing angels, or they dismiss his words as essentially useless artifacts. Thus, I would like to now present my review of the current state of secondary literature that deals specifically with angels during the Reformation and that emphasizes Luther.

Int.1.1. Michael Plathow (1994)

Our first piece of secondary literature is an article by Michael Plathow, entitled, "'Dein heiliger Engeln sei mit mir': Martin Luthers Engelpredigten."[9]

Plathow points out, at the beginning of his article, that Luther's sermons were not concerned with the systemic angelologies of either Pseudo-Dionysius or Thomas Aquinas. In fact, not only is Luther uninterested in Neoplatonic mystic theology or Aristotelian metaphysics, but he also rejects them outright, says Plathow.[10] This is so, he says, because Luther has been shaped by his deep immersion in Old Testament thought. He therefore further widens a conceptual divide between conceptions of angelic nature, which previous theologians have complicated with ideas of 'essence' and hierarchy, vs.

[9] Michael Plathow, "'Dein heiliger Engeln sei mit mir': Martin Luthers Engelpredigten," *Lutherjahrbuch* 94 (1994): 45-70.
[10] Ibid., 48.

angelic office. Luther focuses almost exclusively on the angels' actions, which reveal God's purpose in creating them — that they should serve others.[11] God sustains Creation, and will do so until God decides to end everything, he says, according to Plathow. God could do this alone, but instead, God has created creatures as assistants. The sun, moon, stars, products of nature such as grain and wine, all serve God, as do the three 'visible' hierarchies of government and family, the church, and finally, the angels.[12]

Nevertheless, the key to understanding Luther's angelology as it is presented in his sermons is to remember that teaching and preaching come hand-in-hand for him, even if the sermons have different doctrinal orientations. No matter what the actual subject of a sermon may be, the primary motivation for Luther in giving it, says Plathow, is to show the "center of Scripture" to his audience: the soteriological and eschatological implications of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.[13] And thus, the angels appear in Luther's sermons as a means of pointing his audience towards this truth. They become an example to which his listeners can relate, as a rhetorical device which he employs.[14] The angels, therefore, help Luther's audience come to a fuller understanding of the angels' worship of the triune God, and how to participate with them in it.[15] Plathow then closes his article by restating the main points of his argument, in a series of bullet points and commentary.

Plathow presents his reader with a solid overview of how Luther preaches about the angels in his sermons. And while I agree with Plathow's conclusions, I nevertheless have a few criticisms. The first relates to one of the central points of this dissertation: I find the

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[11] Ibid., 51.
[12] Ibid., 52-3.
[13] Ibid., 49-50.
[14] Ibid., 67-8.
[15] Ibid., 68.

application of the interpretive 'key' to these sermons to be unfairly reductionistic. To be certain, we can assume that Luther's ultimate goal for preaching any sermon was to bring his audience to a deeper understanding of Christ, the Trinity, the Cross, etc., as Plathow argues. But to reduce his comments on angels to being mere avenues towards that understanding is a mistake. Is it not also possible that Luther's goal is to bring his audience into a deeper understanding of, and relationship with, the angels themselves?

Int.1.2. Jürgen Beyer (1996)

In his article, "A Lübeck Prophet in Local and Lutheran Context,"[16] Jürgen Beyer does not actually speak about Martin Luther. Using an incident from 1629 — in which a old grey man dressed in white appeared to one David Frese — as his example, Beyer presents a lively and involved discussion of the many apparitions that visited, exclusively, the early Lutherans in Germany and Scandinavia. These people functioned as 'prophets,' bringing their (supposedly) divine message to the people, and Beyer does an excellent job discussing the societal impacts of these visitations.

What makes this article important for our purposes is that he centers these apparitions firmly in terms of something the Lutherans had lost when they broke away from the Catholic church — their relationship with the saints. Prior to the Reformation, the common understanding was that men and women could be visited by the saints, who would then urge the community to repent or perform penance or even to build a monument to the saint. After the Reformation, the Lutheran prophets simply exchanged

[16] Jürgen Beyer, "A Lübeck Prophet in Local and Lutheran Context," in *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe, 1400-1800,* eds. Bob Scribner and Trevor Johnson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 166-82.

the saints for angels — and continued with the same sort of tasks,[17] performing a function that would have been common in the time and place, and understood by that society.[18] Beyer takes the position that stories of such prophets allowed the common folk to speak out and critique their communities — and allowed them to be heard as authoritative, even by the local authorities.[19] But he in no way approaches the topic as a theological one; his interest is purely sociological/psychological.

Thus, the main impact of this article on our study is that it serves as a major starting point for most of those that come afterwards: angels, in a Reformation context, are to be solely understood in terms of their impacts on societal issues or popular piety. This perspective carries through into both Gordon's and Hendrix's articles, as well as, to a lesser extent, Soergel's.

Int.1.3. Bengt R. Hoffman (1998)

Bengt Hoffman's book, *Theology of the Heart: The Role of Mysticism in the Theology of Martin Luther*,[20] is an excellent study of an alternative path towards understanding Luther: consideration of his tendencies towards mysticism. In his exploration of Luther on these "invisible" aspects of Christian faith and life, Hoffman includes a brief chapter on angels, which he sees as having been marginalized and excised by Luther's interpreters in the same way that Luther's mysticism has.

Luther used the word "invisible" often when describing God, says Hoffman, and was aware of the angels as unseen protectors. According to Hoffman, Luther saw the

[17] Ibid., 168.
[18] Ibid., 169.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Cited above, in Fn. 2.

struggle between good and evil as warfare between invisible, spiritual, personal beings.[21] Even so, this chapter is not so much about Luther's thoughts on the angels in the context of mysticism as it is a short summary of the "rationalization" of Luther's mystical theology — angels being a case in point — by Luther scholars, beginning in the nineteenth century with church historian Emanuel Hirsch.[22]

According to Hoffman, Hirsch's goal was to remove certain "impurities" and "contaminations" — such as angelology — that had crept into Luther's theology, obscuring the more "central" concepts. He therefore stripped away from Luther any thoughts that smacked of "miracle-lore," says Hoffman. Thus, angels were nothing more than "helpful thoughts," mere folklore and contextual immersion.[23] But, as Hoffman points out, all of Hirsch's criticism stems from Luther's own attack on the Roman Church's use of angels as mediators. That Luther disagreed vehemently with the Church on this issue is true; that this disagreement was indicative of a total rejection of angels on Luther's part, as Hirsch reports, is incorrect.[24]

Hoffman also presents Karl Barth as a more recent thinker whose angelology coincides with much of Luther's despite Barth's reservations regarding Christian mysticism in general. Barth's point that Christians and churches will merely linger and not flourish if they lose sense of the angels seems to Hoffman to be an echo of Luther's own perspective. To close the chapter, Hoffman presents a few of Luther's accounts of visitation by (evil, for the most part) spirits, citing them as examples of Luther's heightened awareness of extrasensory experience.

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[21] Hoffman, *Theology*, 31-2.
[22] Ibid., 33.
[23] Ibid., 33-4.
[24] Ibid., 34.

This chapter by Hoffman presents an insightful account of Luther's angelology in the context of his overall mysticism and his focus on, and understanding of, the invisible world and its relationship to the visible one. Especially important as well is the highlighting of Hirsch as an example of a all-too-common tendency to ignore or excise any perceived "anti-rational" characteristics of Luther's theology among his readers, particularly prevalent since the nineteenth century. I would offer one major criticism, one that will be repeated several times in this section of the introduction: Hoffman's text on angels is far too short to be comprehensive. Clearly, much more can be said on the topic. Furthermore, Hoffman is only concerned with the angels insofar as they support his larger goal, that of highlighting and reestablishing Luther's mysticism as a topic of conversation. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with that; he never claims otherwise, and his goals and mine are different, after all. But what Hoffman does present his reader with is quite good, and I would have liked to have seen more.

Int.1.4. Bruce Gordon (2000)

Based on its title, Bruce Gordon's essay, "Malevolent Ghosts and Ministering Angels: Apparitions and Pastoral Care in the Swiss Reformation,"[25] seems an odd choice in which to search for Luther's angelology. But Gordon ranges throughout a spectrum of Reformation theologians in his exploration of the role of ghosts and angels in the minds of 16th-Century believers, such as Ludwig Lavater, Ambrosius Blarer, Heinrich Bullinger, and, to a lesser extent, Calvin, Melanchthon, and Luther. His conclusion is that angels (and ghosts) occupy an interesting place in these men's theological struggle against

[25] Bruce Gordon, "Malevolent Ghosts and Ministering Angels: Apparitions and Pastoral Care in the Swiss Reformation," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 87-109.

superstition and in their understanding of how to best care for their flocks: as tools useful for reinterpreting popular beliefs — especially those dealing with death — and placing them within biblical boundaries.

Luther's angelology definitely occupies a secondary level of interest, serving really as more of a case-in-point to illustrate Gordon's overall conclusion. He quotes from Luther's sermon "On the Angels,"[26] to illustrate Luther's belief that all Christians are surrounded on all sides by angelic agents of God and of the Devil, who wage constant combat for souls; Gordon acknowledges that this belief was literal, not figurative.[27] These angels, Gordon writes, are crucial to both Luther and the later tradition, as agents of human emotion, influencing either feelings of nervousness or safety. In fact, "Without these agents, [humanity] remain[s] impervious to damnation and salvation."[28]

Thus, Gordon concludes, Protestant theologians "appropriated" angels as a way to make sense of the experiences of their followers, to give them angels as a way to feel the assurance of God in their lives. "This was not merely a remote God of sermons, but a God who allowed himself to be anthropomorphized in the form of angels."[29] In fact, he goes on to say that these angels serve as the "Protestants' understanding of God's emotions in the created order."[30] The angels also serve as a way for pastors to talk about God's protection of the faithful in such a way that it would be understood as immediate and immanent.[31]

While Gordon does maintain that these theologians believed in them, his deconstruction of angels into mere tools for pastoral care does not tell the whole story —

[26] WA 32.111-121.
[27] Gordon, "Malevolent Ghosts," 101.
[28] Ibid., 102.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 107.
[31] Ibid.

especially when it comes to Luther's angelology. In this dissertation, our concern is with angelology as a branch of theology; Gordon's concern is with angelology as a branch of psychology or sociology. That our concerns are not the same is perfectly acceptable. But Gordon's perspective serves to illustrate, again, one of the main tendencies evinced by those who look at Protestant angelology, and Luther's in particular — the need to explain the angels away, into something neater and more objective. That the historical figures studied would have never done so is immaterial, according to that standard. But in any case, Gordon here cannot, and does not, take into account all of Luther's angelological commentary, commentary which would illustrate the fullness of his angelological worldview and the insufficiency of Gordon's. Therefore, Gordon cannot present his reader with a complete picture of Luther's thoughts on the angels.

Int.1.5. Scott Hendrix (2005)

In the same way as Gordon's, Scott Hendrix's article, "Angelic Piety in the Reformation: The Good and Bad Angels of Urbanus Rhegius," seems to be an odd place to look for information on Luther's angelology.[32] But as one of the few sources to even mention the words 'Luther' and 'angels' in the same thought, it deserves at least a review.

Hendrix's goal for this article is to comment on a particular sermon of Rhegius's, delivered in 1535 in Hannover. This sermon, he says, provides further example of Gordon's prior conclusion that angels had taken on new roles in the piety of the new

[32] Scott Hendrix, "Angelic Piety in the Reformation: The Good and Bad Angels of Urbanus Rhegius," in *Frömmigkeit -- Theologie -- Frömmigkeitstheologie: Contributions to European Church History: Festschrift für Berndt Hamm zum 60. Geburtstag,* ed. Gudrun Litz, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 385-94.

Protestant movements, roles previously reserved for saints during the medieval period.[33] This sermon, while touching on such topics as what sort of creatures they are and how many kinds there are, mainly deals with the angels' duties and offices, according to Hendrix.

Luther enters the discussion after Hendrix points out that much of what Rhegius teaches in this sermon is echoed across the works of other Reformers (such as Peter Martyr Vermigli and John Calvin). He goes on to mention Luther's (oft-referred-to) criticism of Pseudo-Dionysius's hierarchies in the *Lectures on Genesis*, pointing out that Rhegius avoids similar topics of medieval angelology, out of concern for uncontrolled speculation.[34] He also notes that both Rhegius and Luther taught that each believer is watched and protected by his or her own personal guardian angel, referring to Luther's famous 1530 sermon, "On the Angels."[35] After these limited comments, Luther's name does not appear again in the article, as Hendrix returns to his task of setting the Reformers' angelology into a framework that wraps around the piety practices of early Protestant laity.

Hendrix's article is quite useful as a step towards coming to know how the angelology of the early years of Protestantism was preached, if not heard (a point he makes himself). But as a step towards knowing Luther's angelology in particular, it is only slightly useful. He highlights strong quotations, though he does not form any insightful conclusions based on them specifically. Yet, that is not the goal of Hendrix's

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[33] Ibid., 386.
[34] Ibid., 391. We will be exploring both of these topics — Luther's relationship to Pseudo-Dionysius, and the *Lectures on Genesis* — in subsequent chapters.
[35] Ibid., 392. We will examine this sermon in greater detail in subsequent chapters as well.

article, an article more about the angelology of Urbanus Rhegius than of early Protestantism in general, and as such, should not serve as any real sort of criticism.

Int.1.6. Philip M. Soergel (2006)

The source that has been most effective to date in presenting Luther's angelology is Philip M. Soergel's essay entitled, simply, "Luther on the Angels."[36] In it, he took on a similar task to my own, pointed me towards some significant texts in Luther's corpus, and reached similar conclusions to my own.

Soergel begins his essay in a familiar fashion, in the same way as Gordon and Hendrix's articles: establishing the role that angelic piety retained after the upheaval of the Reformation in the lives of the pious. After presenting a short reflection on Calvin's thoughts on angels by way of contrast to Luther, Soergel opens his main discussion by noting that Luther's corpus contains several thousand references to angels, showing that Luther's concern with them encompassed his entire career. Nevertheless, Soergel's focus is on how Luther understood the angels' role in Creation, and he chooses several excellent texts as illustration.

Logically, Soergel begins with the opening of Luther's career, with his *Lectures on the Psalms* from 1513-15, noting that they serve as an insight into Luther's medieval exegetical training. This training leads Luther to find all manner of allegory within the Psalms, which he points to as not only presenting the reader with revelations about Christ, but about the angels as well, in such passages as Psalm 33 and 104.[37] Likewise,

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[36] Philip M. Soergel, "Luther on the Angels," in *Angels in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 64-82.
[37] Ibid., 69.

Luther's "Sermon on Preparation for Death,"[38] reveals his indebtedness to the medieval *ars moriendi* tradition, as well as his insistence on the importance of the angels' care at the moment of death.[39]

Soergel also highlights Luther's 1526-7 *Lectures on Zechariah,* due to its discussion of the four-tiered method by which God governs Creation. He also brings up "On the Angels," which he views as an example of Luther's increasing frustration with the 'false' accounts of apparitions, and his need to address them by reminding his followers of the unceasing nature of angelic vigilance.[40]

The final text Soergel examines is the 1535-45 *Lectures on Genesis*, after first presenting a summary of the debate over their authenticity.[41] In these *Lectures*, he argues, Luther's focus is on delineating what the angels are incapable of doing, rather than making "positive" statements about them.[42] Soergel also notes, as have other scholars, that Luther here also tears down notions of hierarchy among the angels, including the use of precise names to differentiate between ranks. Even so, despite all of the firm statements Luther made, he remained ambivalent on such issues as angelic appearances, says Soergel.[43] He segues from this point into his closing, returning once again to the topic of angelic appearances and their role in post-Reformation piety.

Overall, Soergel's article provides an excellent and accurate overview of Luther's angelology, and there is very little with which I disagree. In fact, it lead me to several

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[38] WA 2.685-98.
[39] Ibid., 72.
[40] Ibid., 73.
[41] Ibid., 77. This debate is far outside the goals of this dissertation, but I will briefly comment: Some research has called into question the extent to which the *Lectures* were edited and redacted by Luther's friend Veit Dietrich, to the point of putting words into his mouth. Soergel admits that while these concerns are not unimportant, for the purpose of discussing angels, all that the *Lectures* really do is reinforce and/or intensify Luther's previous works — a position with which I agree.
[42] Ibid., 78.
[43] Ibid., 79.

texts and gave me many things to consider. Nevertheless, given that he was writing an article, Soergel was understandably unable to delve as deeply into the topic as I will here. This fact leads me to offer a few criticisms. First, Soergel focuses almost exclusively on the angels' role in Creation. I do not disagree with this decision (I devote an entire chapter to the subject below), but there is more to Luther's angelology than that. Second, he characterizes "On the Angels," as being primarily a work on the Devil and fallen angels;[44] I see the work as more balanced, in that as often as Luther mentions the Devil and his angels, he mentions the good angels. Third, Luther's angelology as it appears in the *Lectures on Genesis* is far more complex than Soergel's depiction here. Again, this fact may simply be due to the choices that he was forced to make while writing an article-length work. Nevertheless, his choice of passages leaves a bit to be desired, in that he failed to at least mention some of the more interesting selections, such as Genesis 18 or 32. Finally, the discussion of the relationship between angels and piety with which Soergel bookended his discussion seemed to limit the conclusions to which he could logically come. However, as an article or a short introduction to Luther's angelology, one could do far, far worse than to read this article.

Int.1.7. Denis Janz (2010)

In 2010, Denis R. Janz compiled and authored The Westminster Handbook to Martin Luther, and, surprisingly enough, chose to include an entry for "angels."[45]

He begins by treading familiar grounds in angelological history. Noting what he calls a "modicum" of interest in angels during the early period of the Christian church,

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[44] Ibid., 74.
[45] Denis R. Janz, "Angels," in *The Westminster Handbook to Martin Luther.* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 5-6.

Janz presents Pseudo-Dionysius as the primary elaborative forerunner of thirteenth-century angelology, best represented by Thomas Aquinas. In response to this history, says Janz, Luther did away with everything that he did not consider explicitly biblical. Luther's response and critique of Pseudo-Dionysius exemplifies this tendency, beginning with his comments in 1520 and finding their fullest expression in the *Lectures on Genesis*. Thus, he argues, Luther concluded not only that the angels are not proper objects of veneration, but also that they should not be looked to for assistance.

However, Janz does present cases where Luther discussed angels in a more positive light. He writes that the angels act as messengers, fulfilling both a "higher" office and a "lower" office. The "higher" office is to praise God and worship in heaven; the "lower" office is the work they must do here on earth, "serving as instruments of God's providence." Not only that, Janz points out, but Luther also saw the angels working as peacemakers between nations, as well as guardians of individuals — from great angels serving the important figures such as kings and princes, to lesser angels doing the menial work of caring for children.

To conclude his article, Janz comments, "… because of the angels' place in Scripture, Luther could not entirely abandon this belief. Thus, … they are decisively sidelined, relegated to the periphery. … Thus angels play no essential role in Luther's worldview."

Clearly, to compare a short encyclopedia entry to a book-length treatment of Luther's angelology is singularly unfair to the shorter work. However, there are points that Janz makes of which we must be particularly critical. While he is right in noting the tension between Luther and Pseudo-Dionysius, as we will see in the next chapter, their

relationship is more complex than Janz presents them here. Likewise, Janz's conclusion that Luther believed angels were no longer needed is based on flawed readings of the texts. Luther's comments on the relationship between God and angelic actions in the *Lectures on Zechariah*[46] lead Janz to minimize the angels' work,[47] because "[God] does everything by Himself."[48] Yet examination of the relevant text shows that Luther's point is much more nuanced, as we will see below. A second example is Janz's statement that Luther believed that because Christianity has Christ, the angels (whom he says are characterized as "ministers, messengers, and forerunners") are no longer needed, according to the *Lectures on Genesis*.[49] But in the passage to which he refers, Luther is merely discussing why there seem to be fewer angelic appearances in the New Testament and in the present age, in comparison to the many appearances of the Old Testament. That observation is what causes Luther to remark that, since Christ's coming, fewer angelic visitations are needed — not that the angels themselves do less or are needed less.

Nevertheless, given the constraints of the medium within which he is working, Janz selects important texts and makes good points with them — even if he misses presenting the entire story.

Int.2. Methodology

Frankly speaking, the number of instances in which Luther says *something* regarding the angels is nearly overwhelming. A simple search of the *Weimar Ausgabe* in its online format reveals nearly 9500 references to angels across Luther's corpus[50] — far

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[46] Which we will explore in great detail in subsequent chapters.
[47] Ibid., 6.
[48] LW 20.169.
[49] LW 4.124-5.
[50] My search included the following words: "engel," "engelein," "engelen," "angelis," "angelium," "angellorum," "angeln," "angelo," "angelorum," "angelos," "angelus," and "angelum." Accessed through

too many to be comprehensively dealt with even in a dissertation-length project. Thus, I have struck a balance between comprehensiveness and representativeness by focusing only on those places where Luther makes significant statements about the angels that answer one or more of four questions, as specified below. Naturally, this means that some occasions will be merely acknowledged before moving on, or be passed over completely. I have also chosen to limit my presentation to his sermons and his 'theological' texts, pamphlets, lectures, and the like — his *Schriften*. Luther's letters, hymns, *Tischreden*,[51] and *Deutsche Bibel* will have to wait their turn. In part, I have determined the relevant texts by considering and appropriating the choices made by previous authors (especially Soergel), but also I have done my own research and readings of primary sources and based my conclusions on that as well.

Even in the texts I have chosen, we find a great many more occasions when Luther speaks of angels than I have included here, and so I have further limited our exploration. I will not be treating any of Luther's comments regarding the Devil or evil angels in any real depth — unless his focus is on their nature or existence as angels, specifically (such as in Chapter II). Many of Luther's references to angels in this context involve him cautioning his followers that Satan can appear as an 'angel of light.'[52]

Marquette University's Raynor Memorial Library site on January 29, 2013. http://0-gateway.proquest.com.libus.csd.mu.edu/openurlctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:luther-us&rft_dat=xri:luther:screen:alle

[51] As Brecht notes, the reliability of the *Tischreden* is somewhat questionable. The collection of quotations that came to be known as the *Tischreden* came about because several of Luther's students would record what Luther said, during very informal occasions, exchanging notes with one another, and incorporating things he might have said on completely unrelated occasions. Nevertheless, the *Tischreden* has value when balanced by more reliably transmitted texts, as Brecht points out — especially, since it incorporates not only theological statements, but also Luther's jokes and personality. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation 1521-1532* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 432.

[52] For example, WA 28.580: "… verkleidet sich doch der Teufel auch wol in einen Engel des Liechts …"

Luther also often refers to angels in passing, without real comment. We find many occasions in his corpus when he speaks about pure gospel, and refers to Galatians 1:8[53] when doing so.[54] While such occasions are interesting, they are not useful for our task in this dissertation. Similarly, in his biblical commentaries, even when angels are mentioned in a text, Luther's focus is on something completely different. One notable example is his 1527 commentary on Isaiah 6. Isaiah's vision features the angels quite prominently, but Luther seems virtually unconcerned with them. His focus is instead on teaching his followers how to worship God correctly, and that the salvific moment of coming to Christ is transformative, bringing one out of death into life. The angels in this passage only serve to illustrate these truths for him (and we even find one of Luther's rare allegories in this commentary).[55] What little Luther does say about the angels here he repeats in other places, with more commentary — thus, like other concepts he repeats, I have chosen to leave them out.

I should also take a moment to comment on the chronological divisions I have made in dealing with Luther's life and texts. While I do plan on presenting, in the various sections of Chapter II, a glimpse into his life, I must state that this is in no way meant to be a comprehensive retelling of Luther's life and career. Plenty of pages on that subject have already been written, each volume of which — for good or ill — follows its author's own agenda, and each of which reveals a different facet of the life of this legendarily complex theologian. One way in which these agendas manifest themselves is the method by which a particular author chooses to divide Luther's life into manageable periods.

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[53] "But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!" (NRSV)
[54] For example: WA 7.283, WA 7.405, WA 8.485, WA 11.432, WA 26.574, WA 33.528, etc.
[55] LW 16.69-77; WA 25.110-114.

Certainly, one reason for making such divisions is simple expediency; approaching his life as smaller-yet-connected pieces is much easier than confronting it as a whole, and allows us to explore it in greater detail and with a narrower focus. But more important than the division itself is the choice of what years will comprise the dividing lines.

As an example of how one could divide Luther's life, we can survey Martin Brecht's biography of Luther, which is in three volumes. The first ends with the year 1521, the second in 1532, and the last, of course, in 1546, the year of Luther's death. His choice to end the first volume at the point which he did was two-fold: first, 1521 was the year that Luther first appeared "on the stage of world history," at the Diet of Worms; and second, because Bornkamm's work on Luther's middle years had recently itself been published, and that work itself began with the year 1521.[56] The second volume comprises what he feels to be the years that 'shaped and defined' the Reformation, a period that ends with the death of Elector John the Steadfast. Brecht himself notes that Bornkamm also wished to end his own volume at that point, but died before he was able to complete it. Even so, Brecht acknowledges that his concerns and his method differ from Bornkamm.[57] By contrast, James Kittleson, in his single volume, decries the common tendency to periodize Luther's life, saying that this leads to a tendency to perceive Luther as having lived multiple lives. Thus, he chooses to "treat all of his life with reasonably equal coverage." He also praises recent works for treating the later years of Luther's life

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[56] Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983), xii.

[57] Brecht, *Shaping and Defining*, xi-xii. See also Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career (1521-1530)* Trans. by E. Theodore Bachmann. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

with greater scrutiny, naming both Edwards and Haile as commendable examples.[58] And yet, Kittleson himself devotes barely one third of his book to Luther's life after 1525.

Edwards' volume is not meant to be a biography, strictly speaking; his goal is an analysis of Luther's polemical works as well as an attempt to place them in the larger context of his overall theology and life. But in doing so, he presents his reader with a great deal of insight into the latter stages of Luther's life during the years 1531-1546. While Edwards does not explicitly state his reasons for beginning his treatment with 1531, he does note that, "After 1530 Luther's correspondence and his published polemics reflected a shift in the character of the Reformation itself." This shift is marked by an increase in works directed towards already-converted Protestants, many of whom were politically significant.[59] He also notes that this shift also coincides with the formation of the League of Schmalkalden in 1531.[60]

Thus, I must confess that I too have my own agenda upon which my presentation of Luther's life rests. I have settled on dividing both Luther's life and his angelology into three sections: the years pre-1526, 1526-1535, and 1536-1545. The reason I chose these stages for division is that these crux years — 1525-26 and 1535-36 — are points of change for Luther, both in his life and in his angelology. During these cruxes, Luther experienced major joys, bitter losses, and extraordinary accomplishments — all of which naturally shaped both his theology in general, and his angelology in particular, for the decades which followed them. In Chapter II, I will offer a short discussion of the various events that occurred during or near to these pivotal years in the appropriate sections. In

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[58] James M. Kittleson, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 11.
[59] Mark U. Edwards, Jr, *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics 1531-1546* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983), 20.
[60] Ibid., 24.

addition, a further reason for these particular divisions is that there are certain texts of Luther's that serve as my primary examples of his angelology, each of which fall into these divisions: his *Lectures on Hebrews* (1517), his *Lectures on Zechariah* (1526/7), and his *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545). In these selections, we see evidence of both continuity and innovation in his angelology. To be sure, in order to present Luther's angelology as completely as possible, we will be exploring many of his texts, from all years of his life — but these three texts will be singled out for deeper analysis.

Int.3. The Point of this Exercise

Since beginning work on this dissertation, I find that the question I am most asked after, "What is the topic of your dissertation?" is "Does Luther *have* an angelology?" My answer — and the foundational argumentative conclusion of this dissertation — encompasses four main points:

1) Yes, Luther does have an angelology.

In all honesty, this point is one that needs to be clearly established. While it is true that Luther's angelology is in no way systematic, it is also true that he comments constantly on the angels, throughout his body of work. After piecing many of these comments together, I have formulated what I believe are four main questions that Luther — and the tradition that preceded him — asked when considering the angels: 1) what are the angels?; 2) what is the angels' role in Creation?; 3) what is their relationship to humanity?; and 4) what is their relationship to the Church? Even so, the distinctions assumed by these questions are somewhat artificial, in that Luther himself does not draw such lines between the nature of the angels, their role or their work in creation, their relationships – all such considerations are intertwined. However, in order to highlight

each of these concepts and their significance individually, they must endure separation before reconnection to the larger whole in which they exist.

2) Not only was he conversant with the prior angelological tradition, but also he relied on and responded to figures and teachings from both the early and medieval church when formulating his own conclusions.

In the most important sense, Luther's angelology is not all that radical or innovative. He remains firmly grounded in the theological tradition in which he grew, and his angelology reflects that. Nevertheless, Luther was not shy about expressing his disappointment or disagreement with certain authors when he believed they were misguided, or simply wrong, concerning the angels. Many of these disagreements are acknowledged by Luther scholars, and yet, the many times Luther is in agreement with prior theologians (especially the medievals) regarding the angels are often ignored.

3) His angelology was important, not only to him personally, but to his larger theological mindset and framework — and this is consistently true throughout his life.

The angels form an integral part of Luther's ecclesiology, his cosmology, his ontology, his apocalypticism, his anthropology, his eschatology — virtually any flavor of theology one could name finds Luther involving the angels at some level. In fact, neglecting to at least mention angels when discussing Luther's thoughts on such matters does him a disservice. And these statements are true throughout his entire life. At no point do we find any significant lull in his mention of angels. Certainly, as we will see, there are times when different concerns occupy his thoughts, and when he presents different emphases in his angelology, but these concerns never override or (aside from a

very limited number of times) contradict what he has said before. When it comes to the angels, the Luther of 1545 and the Luther of 1517 agree far more often than not.

4) His underlying fundamental concern when speaking or teaching about the angels was pastoral.

Luther certainly does address some of the more intellectually complex questions about the angels, such as the nature of their being, or how one should understand how they fit into the larger order of Creation. And he does so in a manner that does justice to the intellectual complexity not only of the subject itself, but also of the prior tradition and its own approach to angelology. Nevertheless, at all times, his goal — whether explicitly stated or not — is to help his audience to come to know the angels as passionate beings of unending goodness, who want nothing more than to care for them and to support them in their imperiled passage through earthly life. On the topic of angels, Luther speaks to his listeners as pastor first, theologian second.

But before we can fully involve ourselves in Luther's angelology, we must first explore the angelology of both the early and the medieval church.

"Our Lord said that He was the door of the sheepfold. Now what is this sheepfold of which Christ is the door? It is the heart of the Father. Christ is indeed the precious door that unlocked the loving paternal heart, that adorable heart of God that was locked to all mankind. In the sheepfold all the saints are assembled. The Shepherd is the Eternal Word, the door is Christ's humanity. By the sheep are meant the human souls; *yet Angels, too, belong to this fold*, and to all rational creatures the Eternal Word has opened the way to that beloved dwelling-place of which He is the Good Shepherd."

— Johannes Tauler, "Sermon 27"[1]

Chapter I: Angels in the Early and Medieval Church

I.1. Why these Theologians?

The first task with which we must concern ourselves is the determining the scope and shape of the angelological landscape in which Luther was theologically formed, and to which he responded, consciously and unconsciously, throughout his career. While the list of possible influences is quite lengthy, I have narrowed it to eight notable figures: Augustine (354-430 CE), Chrysostom (347-407 CE), Pseudo-Dionysius (5th/6th Century CE), Bernard of Clairvaux (1190-1153 CE), Peter Lombard (1096-1165 CE), Bonaventure (1221-1274 CE), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 CE), and Gabriel Biel (1420/25-1495 CE). At no time — in this chapter especially — am I attempting to claim some sort of definitive, distinct, direct 'causal' link between the angelological works and teachings of these eight theologians and the angelology that Luther presents to us.[2] Nevertheless, each of these authors is a man by whom we know Luther was influenced, intrigued, or even irritated. For that reason, before delving into their responses to our four

[1] Johannes Tauler, "Sermon 27," in *Johannes Tauler: Sermons*, trans. Maria Shrady (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 99. Italics mine.
[2] Except when definitive evidence exists — such as when Luther himself tells us. As we will see, when Luther confronts the questions of how or why the Devil fell, for example, he usually mentions having consulted Augustine or Bernard of Clairvaux, and shares his reactions to their thoughts.

basic questions, I will present evidence for their inclusion in this chapter — including what works of theirs were available in the University library at Wittenberg, where Luther lived for the majority of his life. And afterwards, by presenting a sketch of these authors' answers to those questions, I will attempt to condense and create the same sort of grounding that Luther himself had, thereby enabling us to more clearly see both the manner of foundation he claimed for himself and the creativity and innovation of his own thoughts and interpretations.

Ultimately, what is useful to take away is that questions of who or what Luther may have been influenced by are not easy questions to answer — but that we are certainly able to hear the echoes of the patristic and medieval writers in his thoughts and words, and those of certain figures more clearly than others.

I.1.1. Augustine (354-430 CE)

Our first theologian, Augustine, is a perfect example of the difficulty inherent in this task. The nearly-universal hermeneutical assumption is that Martin Luther was clearly and strongly influenced by Augustine of Hippo. The question of the *extent* to which Martin Luther was influenced by Augustine directly, however, is not an easy one to answer. For the past 150 years or so, the search for the answer has been dominated by conflict over how, exactly, Luther was a product of his late medieval Augustinian context. But as Eric Saak shows, a significant complication in tracing this development arises when one realizes that there has been no consistent definition of the term "late medieval Augustinianism" used by scholars on whatever side of the debate one wishes to

focus.[3] Furthermore, that entire debate itself is hampered by being framed only in terms of Luther's development. Far better, argues Saak, would be for scholarship to determine a common definition of Augustinianism in the late medieval period, divorcing both that definition and its scholarship from questions of inheritance on Luther's part — and only after having done so, to attempt to see how "late medieval Augustinianism" may or may not have shown itself in Luther's work.[4] Our purpose in this section of the dissertation is not to rehash that debate, however.

Instead, we rely on a few major points. The assertion that Luther knew Augustine's works is sound;[5] we can find evidence of this fact at all points in his career. In addition, Augustine definitely made claims about the angels, and Luther proves himself familiar enough with those claims to respond to them. As one example, in his *Lectures on Genesis,* Luther criticizes Augustine's treatment of the six days of creation as "mystical days of knowledge among the angels;" Luther calls Augustine's work here, "extraordinary trifling."[6] In addition, Augustine's influence on the prior tradition was universal and incalculable, which we readily see in both Aquinas and Lombard. Thus, the

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[3] Eric L. Saak, *High Way to Heaven : the Augustinian Platform between Reform and Reformation, 1292-1524* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002), 699.
[4] Ibid., 698.
[5] As Philip D. Krey says, "Although the influence of Augustine on Martin Luther, the great sixteenth-century reformer (1483-1540), is proverbial, more intensive studies of Augustine's influence on him are needed for the different stages in Luther's theological development, and how in different historical context and from a different theological perspective he read, cited, appropriated, and critiqued Augustine's writings." ("Luther, Martin." In *Augustine Through the Ages*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 516. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.) Krey's article provides an excellent overview and bibliography as a starting point. Likewise, Saak's project (Op. Cit.) presents an extensive survey of "Augustinianism" and its influence on the late Middle Ages and early Reformation, offering many occasions where Luther was influenced by the Augustinian tradition (particularly that of the OESA) if not Augustine himself. Regarding the church fathers in general, Manfred Schulze provides a glimpse into how Luther appropriated not only Augustine but also Jerome, with specific attention to his arguments against contemporary Pelagianism, Arianism, and Nestorianism. ("Martin Luther and the Church Fathers." In *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, edited by Irena Backus. Vol. 2, 573-626. Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997.)
[6] LW 1.4, WA 42.4: "Ac Augustinus mirabiliter ludit in tractatione sex dierum, quos facit mysticos dies cognitionis in Angelis, non naturales."

reasonable conclusion is that Augustine would have been in the background of Luther's angelology.

Works of Augustine's that were definitively available to Luther include his *Libri de trinitate*,[7] *De moribus Ecclesiae,*[8] *Sermones ad eremitas,*[9] *Liber Epistolarum,*[10] *Opus explanationis psalmorum*,[11] and most importantly for our purposes, his *De civitate Dei*.[12]

I.1.2. Chrysostom (347-407 CE)

As is true for Augustine, the extent to which John Chrysostom influenced Luther's angelology is difficult to determine — but for different reasons. The major difficulty in this case is that very little scholarship has been done on Chrysostom's angelology. Furthermore, very little scholarship has likewise been done on the connection between Chrysostom and Luther. These gaps in scholarship should be filled, but doing so is far outside the realm of possibility for this dissertation.

Nonetheless, Chrysostom's name keeps surfacing in Luther's corpus. At two extremes in the scope of his career, Luther refers to Chrysostom in both his *Lectures on Hebrews* and his *Lectures on Genesis*, both of which are texts with angelological significance. In his *Hebrews* commentary, he references and quotes Chrysostom at least 75 times, more than twice his nods to both Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux *combined.* And in the later *Genesis* lectures, echoes of Chrysostom can be heard.

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[7] Sachiko Kusukawa, *A Wittenberg University Library Catalogue of 1536* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995). I will be listing individual works according to Kusukawa's numbering system. She describes her process on pages xix-xxvi of her introduction. For example, Augstine's *Libri de trinitate* is catalog number (#) 145a.
[8] Ibid., #147a.
[9] Ibid., #155.
[10] Ibid., #156.
[11] Ibid., #157.
[12] Ibid., #144.

This latter point deserves some elaboration. As one of the rare historians to discuss this connection, Mickey Mattox argues that Luther's approach to biblical interpretation shared many characteristics in common with Chrysostom (such as a deep commitment to reading the New Testament in continuity with the Old), and that they came to very similar exegetical conclusions.[13] So for example, the young Luther and Chrysostom both concluded that the story of Eve's temptation serves as a means to understand the universality of the experience of sin and its psychological reality.[14] In the later *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther is sympathetic to Sarah's sin of laughter in Genesis 18, as is Chrysostom.[15] What both men emphasize is the *historical reality* of these women and of the events in the Old Testament, making them real to the believer in a way that the interpreters who emphasized allegorical meanings could not do. Despite these similarities, Mattox seems to be cautious regarding a direct influence by Chrysostom over Luther. Perhaps Luther's unconscious and conscious hermeneutic was merely similar to Chrysostom's, to the extent that they each reached nearly identical conclusions at the same points in the Biblical text. Until scholarship takes up this specific question, it must remain unanswered.

Given this ambiguity, we can make similar assertions to the ones made about Augustine. That Luther was familiar with Chrysostom is certain. Chrysostom wrote often of the angels, thus we can likewise conclude that Luther would have been at least passingly familiar with his thoughts on them; in fact, there are times when Luther and Chrysostom seem to line up on the angels. And like Augustine — though perhaps not to

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[13] Mickey Leland Mattox, *"Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs" : Martin Luther's Interpretation of the Women of Genesis in the Enarrationes in Genesin, 1535-45* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 23.
[14] Ibid., 55.
[15] Ibid., 121.

the same extent — Chrysostom's presence in, and influence on, the theology of the prior tradition is certain. Thus, his inclusion in this chapter is warranted.

The University library had a nearly complete collection of Chrysostom's works, including his commentaries on the letters of Paul,[16] his *Opera* (in two volumes),[17] his homilies on the gospels of Matthew and John,[18] and on Genesis (translated by Oecolampadius),[19] and even a volume of *Opuscula*.[20]

I.1.3. Pseudo-Dionysius (5th/6th Century CE)

As is the case with Augustine and Chrysostom, determining the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on Luther's theology is difficult. However, doing so is difficult for yet another reason: rather than explicit praise or theological appropriation and echo, Luther instead speaks on several occasions of his distrust of Pseudo-Dionysius and his disgust at the Aeropagite's conclusions. Even so, the nature and intensity of Luther's disagreement is not constant over the course of his career. Keeping in mind our focus on angelology, we can say that in his early career, Luther seemed totally in congruence with Pseudo-Dionysius. In works such as his *Lectures on Hebrews*,[21] Luther even refers to him as "Saint Dionysius," and relies on him as a source for argumentation.[22]

As early as 1520, however, Luther began heavily criticizing the Aeropagite. A clear example from this period comes from his *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in which he characterizes Pseudo-Dionysius as "dangerous," and "more of a Platonist than a

[16] Kusukawa, *Library Catalogue,* #29 & 132.
[17] Ibid., #125 & 126a.
[18] Ibid., #129a.
[19] Ibid., #127.
[20] Ibid., #141c.
[21] We will be examining this text in detail in later chapters.
[22] LW 29.121, WA 57.III.111: "Famosa est questio, an omnes angeli mittantur. Divus Dionisius dicit …"

Christian," saying that no one should read him.[23] And we see in 1526, in the *Lectures on Zechariah,*[24] Luther cautioning against such "hallucinations," as Pseudo-Dionysius's teachings on the angelic hierarchy.[25] Given such an early downward turn in Luther's affections, Paul Rorem argues for a consistency in Luther's unease with respect to Pseudo-Dionysius — primarily on Christological grounds — and that the shift in position that occurs is "not doctrinal but historical."

Furthermore, Rorem asserts that this shift occurred most likely due to Luther's encounter with the 1516 Greek New Testament of Erasmus, whose comments on Acts 17:34 pointed towards Lorenzo Valla's own arguments against Pseudo-Dionysius' apostolic authority.[26] Claiming that Luther's later repudiation of Pseudo-Dionysius's texts may have involved an intentional magnification of his appreciation for the same, Rorem concludes that "[Luther's] extant texts show an apparent discontinuity of historical perspective and polemical freedom, but a certain continuity in doctrinal opposition to the Dionysian theology before and after *The Babylonian Captivity*."[27]

Despite the force of Rorem's conclusions, more recent research has reopened the question, claiming that there is more in Luther's thought that is in congruence with Pseudo-Dionysius than has been acknowledged. As Knut Alfsvåg has pointed out, even

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[23] LW 36.109, as cited in Paul Rorem, "Martin Luther's Christocentric Critique of Pseudo-Dionysian Spirituality," *Lutheran Quarterly* 11.3 (1997): 291.
[24] Likewise, more on this text in later chapters.
[25] LW 20.26, WA 13.568: "… et quae somniat Dionysius de coelesti hierarchia angelos alios ab aliis doceri quosdam esse infimos …"
[26] Rorem, "Luther's Christocentric Critique," 297-8. For Erasmus' commentary, see Anne Reeve and M. A. Screech, eds., *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: Acts, Romans, I and II Corinthians: Facsimile of the final Latin text with all earlier variants* (Lieden: Brill, 1990), 312-3. For a more in-depth discussion of the biblical work of both Valla and Erasmus, see Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), particularly 186-7, where Bentley discusses Erasmus' appropriation of Valla on Acts 17:34. For Luther's own perspective on Valla, see William John Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2010), 96-9.
[27] Ibid., 298.

after his 'break' with Pseudo-Dionysius, Luther remained willing to acknowledge him as a conversation partner. At the Wartburg, in 1521, Luther even corrected his opponents' faulty usage of the Aeropagite — from memory.[28] In fact, Luther's abiding refrain of God as totally and utterly transcendent giver is a consistent echo of Dionysian negativity, despite the clear unease Luther felt towards the character of the apophaticism of Pseudo-Dionysius and certain of his commentators. Referring to commentaries on the *Mystical Theology*, Luther maintained that, "the appropriation of divine givenness is dependent on a rejection of everything else that can only be produced by the experience of this life as trial and tribulation." Dionysian spirituality, for him, is often too speculative and unable to come to terms with the experiential nature of the "divine rejection of sinful finitude."[29] Still, Luther remained on good terms with certain authors who fall into the Dionysian category, especially those who are theocentrically and experientially grounded, such as John Tauler and Bonaventure.[30] He appreciated Bonaventure, in this case, for the way in which he brought a stronger focus on Christ and the Cross to his Dionysian spirituality.[31] His appreciation for Tauler is due to Tauler's example as a person who understood that only after a period of trial can a Christian fully understand the reality of God's presence and love. Tauler's work had what Luther felt were necessary components of the truth of the 'hiddenness of God': divine activity and existential actuality, both of which Luther saw as being absent from most Dionysian apophaticism.[32]

But perhaps we have ranged a bit far afield. Luther's tension with Pseudo-Dionysius on questions of apophaticism is nowhere near as important for our purposes as

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[28] Knut Alfsvåg, "Luther as a Reader of Dionysius the Aeropagite," *Studia Theologica* 65 (2011): 102.
[29] Ibid., 107.
[30] Ibid., 107-8.
[31] Knut Alfsvåg, *What No Mind Has Conceived: On the Significance of Christological Apophaticism* (Leuven; Paris: Peeters, 2010), 207.
[32] Ibid., 209.

the fact that Luther knew his work and knew it well. Despite his claim in the *Lectures on Genesis* that Pseudo-Dionysius was "full of the silliest prattle" when it came to the angelic and ecclesiastic hierarchies,[33] Luther, throughout his career, relies on him as someone deserving of consideration and response — even though that response often takes the form of disagreement, insult, and dismissal. Furthermore, Pseudo-Dionysius's influence on angelology in general, and on Luther's own sources in particular, cannot be stressed enough. For that reason, if no other, he is necessarily included in this chapter.

While the titles of the volumes of Pseudo-Dionysius contained in the University library are not as descriptive as we might wish, we nonetheless find that his *De mystica theologia*[34] was available, as well as a volume of his *Opera*.[35]

I.1.4. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 CE)

As Franz Posset has claimed, in addition to the "Augustine awakening" that was taking place in the early years of Luther's career, there was a "Bernard renaissance" as well.[36] In his book *The Real Luther: A Friar at Erfurt and Wittenberg*, he argues compellingly and extensively that Luther was himself profoundly influenced by Bernard of Clairvaux on all theological levels, and bases his argument on Luther's own words and those of Philip Melanchthon. One work that Posset points to specifically is Bernard's *On Consideration*, which not only Luther endorsed (in his *Lectures on Romans* in 1515, and his *Lectures on Hebrews* in 1517), but both Staupitz and Erasmus did as well.[37] Despite

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[33] LW 1.235, WA 42.175: "Apud Graecos est Dionysius, quem iactant Pauli discipulum fuisse, sed id non est verum. Est enim plenissimus ineptissimarum nugarum, ubi de Hierarchia coelesti et ecclesiastica disputat."
[34] Kusukawa, *Library Catalogue,* #135.
[35] Ibid., #25.
[36] Franz Posset, *The Real Luther: A Friar at Erfurt and Wittenberg* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 86.
[37] Ibid, 88.

offering a few major instances of angelological thinking, the focus of *On Consideration* is not on the angels, nor was Luther's appreciation of the text angelologically driven, making it, generally speaking, only tangentially related to our task. However, what is relevant is the high esteem in which Luther held Bernard's work in a general sense, and the underlying similarities between Bernard's angelology and Luther's. Luther relies on Bernard in a 1522 sermon on the fifth Sunday after Trinity,[38] and quotes him often in his early *Scholia*[39] and *Glossa*[40] on the Psalms. He refers to Bernard when discussing sin and penance in a 1532 sermon,[41] and again in a 1533 sermon on Luke 10.[42] And in his *Lectures on Genesis*, as we will see in a later section, Luther again refers to Bernard's teaching that the devil had become envious of humanity and therefore fell.[43]

Sometimes, Luther lists Bernard among other church fathers such as Augustine, Jerome, Francis, Gregory, and the like, as in his 1525 sermon on the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity — where he categorizes them as "saints,"[44] — and again in his 1531 Galatians commentary.[45] He does the same sort of thing years later, in the *Lectures on*

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[38] *Church Postils* IV.159; WA 22.87: "**Wie auch S. Bernhard zeuget…**"
[39] WA 3.82: "Unde Bernardus serm. 27. super Cant …"; 3.105: "Sicut B. Bernardus ait ..."; 3.417: "Ut Bernardus ait …"; 3.420: "Quia secundum Bernardum …".
[40] WA 3.101: "Quia secundum Bernardum …"; 3.110: "Quia secundum Bernardum …"; 3.233: "ut dicunt experti Bernardus, Bonaventura, Hugo."; 3.640: "Quia secundum Bernardum …".
[41] WA 36.205: "De S. Bernardo dicunt, quod quidam magnus peccator ei sit confessus, **dem setzt er 5** paternoster **zur busse, erschrickt der da fur** et dicit: **wie meint yhrs?** tamen tam magna peccata feci et vos **legt so ein kleine busse auff,** dicit Bernardus: **meinst, du wolsts da mit bussen?**"
[42] WA 37.142: "Sic Bernardus in Canticis …"
[43] LW 1.23, WA 42.18: "Et Bernhardus cogitat Luciferum vidisse in Deo, fore ut homo super Angelorum naturam elevaretur, Hanc homini foelicitatem superbum spiritum invidisse ac sic esse lapsum. Sed valeant ista, quantum merentur, Ego neminem coëgerim talibus opinionibus assentiri."; LW 4.256, WA 43.319: "Extat Bernardi dictum de lapsu malorum Angelorum, qui fingit, sicut Poëtae figmenta habent, illam fuisse occasionem lapsus Sathanae de coelo: quia viderit filium Dei incarnandum esse, et assumpturum hanc miseram massam humani generis, deinde Angelis demandari ministerium et curam naturae humanae, quae ipsis longe erat miserior: indignitate igitur rei motum contempsisse filium Dei, ideoque coelo excidisse. Satis pulchra et pia cogitatio est…".
[44] *Church Postils* 5.375, WA 15.755: "Puto Augustinum, Hieronymum, Bernardum, Gregorium sanctos esse…"
[45] WA 40.I.686: "quo Hieronymus, Augustinus, Gregorius, Bernardus, Franciscus, Dominicus et alii multi observarunt …"

Genesis,[46] but goes so far as to say, "I prefer Bernard to all the others, for he had the best knowledge of religion, as his writings show."[47]

In the University library, Bernard was represented by his *Opera*[48] and *Floretus*.[49]

I.1.5. Peter Lombard (1096-1165 CE)

We cannot present a survey of Martin Luther's angelological formation without at least touching on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. Lombard's *Sentences* were well-represented in the University library. Not only were they available on their own,[50] but the library also held copies of many other theologians' commentaries thereon — including those of Gabriel Biel,[51] Bonaventure,[52] Albert the Great,[53] Cajetan,[54] Duns Scotus,[55] Richard of St. Victor,[56] and Thomas Aquinas.[57] This fact should not be surprising, since the *Sentences* were the standard theological textbook of the medieval period, on which all students seeking a master's degree in theology were required to comment. Luther himself wrote his *Sentences* commentary in 1510,[58] and is commonly acknowledged as one of the last great theologians to do so. Nevertheless, most of Lombard's value for the theologians of that period was the way in which he organized and integrated the sources of the tradition that preceded him, not any particular insights that he may have contributed to

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[46] LW 8.7, WA 44.584: "sed exempla bonorum et sanctorum videamus, qualis fuit Augustinus, Bernardus, et alii multi …".
[47] LW 2.269, WA 42.453-4: "ac antefero omnibus Bernhardum: habuit enim religionis optimam cognitionem: sicut ostendunt eius scripta…"
[48] Kusukawa, *Library Catalogue,* #191.
[49] Ibid., #199.
[50] Ibid., #411, #414.
[51] Ibid., 405a.
[52] Ibid., #397.
[53] Ibid., #396.
[54] Ibid., #399.
[55] Ibid., #412.
[56] Ibid., #410.
[57] Ibid., #409b, #415, #416, #417.
[58] WA 9.28-94.

the discussion. As we will see, when considering angels, Lombard was mostly content to repeat the conclusions of thinkers such as Augustine or Pseudo-Dionysius.

I.1.6. Bonaventure (1221-1274 CE)

As Posset points out, Luther consulted and admired Bonaventure, from an early point in his career — even from before he read Augustine.[59] While prior research had characterized him as a possible influence pointing Luther towards mysticism, Posset makes a case that Bonaventure's influence should not be so narrowly construed, based on the discovery of early marginalia that Luther inscribed in a pair of texts written by Bonaventure.[60] Luther would go on to actually make cross-references to Bonaventure in volumes of Anselm's that he read not long afterwards.[61] Luther mentions Bonaventure in a positive light, sometimes alongside Bernard, in his *Lectures on Genesis*.[62] And as we will see, Luther also refers to Bonaventure regarding angelic matters, in his 1517 *Lectures on Hebrews*.[63] While he may not have explicitly acknowledged him as often as we might hope, Luther clearly held Bonaventure in high regard, and was mindful of him throughout his career.

In addition to his commentary on the *Sentences*, the University also held copies of Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*,[64] his sermons,[65] and his *Vita Christi*.[66]

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[59] Posset, *The Real Luther*, 108.
[60] Ibid., 106.
[61] Ibid., 107.
[62] LW 4.298, WA 43.349: "Et Bonaventurae egregia vox est…". With Bernard: LW 5.221, WA 43.581: "Bernardus valde dilexit incarnationem Christi, item Bonaventura …"; LW 5.323, WA 43.651: "qualis fuit Bernardus et Bonaventura, qui cum essent alioqui sancti et boni viri…".
[63] LW 29.121, 57.III.112: "De quo lacius Bonaventura…".
[64] Kusukawa, *Library Catalogue,* #195.
[65] Ibid., #197.
[66] Ibid., #406c.

I.1.7. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 CE)

Our next theologian to consider is Thomas Aquinas, as well as the extent of Martin Luther's familiarity with his teachings and reliance upon his work. Despite a reliable frequency of diatribes against the "scholastics" and jabs against their theology in his corpus, the question of how well Luther actually knew them — and Thomas Aquinas in particular — has not been answered definitively. However, scholars such as Denis Janz and Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen[67] have tackled the problem with varying degrees of success. One theory that has quite a bit of evidence supporting it is that Luther's knowledge of Aquinas came to him primarily through his study of Gabriel Biel.[68] Another possibility is that Luther encountered Aquinas through the work of other faculty members and clergy who were members of the 'late medieval Thomist school.' Janz, however, dismisses this notion — and argues that "the contribution of the *schola moderna Augustiniana* to Luther's knowledge of Thomas may well have been more substantial."[69] The third possibility, on which we will spend the majority of our time in this section, is that Luther gained his knowledge of Aquinas from Aquinas himself. In the libraries of Erfurt, the majority of his corpus was available: several copies of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, his commentaries on Aristotle, Boethius, (Pseudo-) Dionysius, and on Scripture, as well as the *Summa Theologiae* and the attendant tables, indices, and 'Concordantia literature.'[70]

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[67] Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen, "On the Critical Reception of the Thought of Thomas Aquinas in the Theology of Martin Luther," in *Aquinas as Authority* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 65-86.
[68] Denis R. Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas: The Angelic Doctor in the Thought of the Reformer* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1989), 101. Cf. zur Mühlen, "Critical Reception," 68-70. Zur Mühlen makes a strong argument there that Biel is Luther's major source for Thomistic thought, but I find Janz's treatment much more convincing.
[69] Ibid., 101.
[70] Ibid., 103.

The library at the University of Wittenberg had similar holdings.[71] Clearly, Luther had easy access to Aquinas's unfiltered thought.

Despite believing him to be the most prominent and significant scholastic,[72] Luther was nevertheless fully aware that even the greatest theologian can err. Due to the esteem in which they may be held by their followers, such theologians can assume more authority than they properly deserve. This over-estimation of Aquinas by his followers was the most significant error that they made, in Luther's mind, and an error that could prove to be damaging to both the church and to theology in general.[73] Nevertheless, when he is preaching and teaching about angels, Luther does refer explicitly to Aquinas on several occasions. In a sermon given in 1529, speaking on Luke 2 (the angels' announcement of Christ's birth), he remarks that here Christians are being taught to praise God, which reveals more wisdom than does, "Thomas on the substance of the angels."[74]

Certainly, Luther seems here to be implying that Thomas does not teach that the angels themselves praise God. But if one reads the *Summa Theologiae*,[75] one will see that Aquinas does argue that some of the angels remain in heaven, praising and glorifying God. However, as Janz rightly points out, in the opusculum *De Substantiis Separatis*, Aquinas does not make this claim nor does he refer to the honoring of God by the angels

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[71] Kusukawa, *Library Catalogue,* #126c, #286-89, #389, #409b, #415-18, #679b-d, #742b.
[72] Janz, *Angelic Doctor*, 96.
[73] Ibid., 114.
[74] Ibid., 69; WA 29.673: "Hoc est canticum angelorum: qui intelligeret ista verba, in his inveniret magnam sapientiam. Certe plus **sthet drinne** quam in omnium gentilium libris et Thomae de substantia angelorum **das got sein ehre habe.**"
[75] I.112.2, *Summa Theologiae* 15.38: "Et ideo simplicter dicendum est, cum Dionysio, quod superiores angeli nunquam ad exterius ministerium mittuntur.

Ad primum ergo, dicendum quod sicut in missionibus divinarum Personarum aliqua est visibilis, quae attenditur secundum creaturam corpoream; aliqua invisibilis, quae fit secundum spiritualem effectum; ita in missionibus angelorum aliqua dicitur exterior, quae scilicet est ad aliquod ministerium circa corporalia exhibendum, et secundum hanc missionem non omnes mittuntur; alia est interior, secundum intellectuales effectus, prout scilicet unus angelus illuminat alium, et sic omnes angeli mittuntur."

— and that Luther was therefore correct in his criticism. Thus, Luther reveals more than a passing familiarity with this specific work.[76]

In two sermons preached on the same day in 1531, we find Luther's next explicit references to Aquinas's angelology. Speaking on a classic text in angelology (Matthew 18:10)[77], Luther actually sides with Aquinas against Pseudo-Dionysius, whom he sees as believing that humanity is beneath the notice of the angels.[78] Later in the day, however, Luther is more critical of what he sees as Aquinas's tendency to overlook the guardianship of the angels, especially since in Psalm 91:11-12,[79] one can easily see that they are called to assume that responsibility.[80] Yet again, if one studies the *Summa Theologiae*,[81] one will come to the conclusion that Luther is wrong in his assessment. But if one looks at *De Substantiis Separatis*, one will see that he is correct: Thomas does not mention Psalm 91 in that work. Luther again proves himself familiar with this *opusculum.*

The last explicit reference Luther makes to Aquinas's angelology occurs in 1537, when he again preached on the song of the angels in Luke 2. Here Luther criticizes Aquinas for spending so much time on speculating on the way in which angels

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[76] Janz, *Angelic Doctor*, 69.
[77] "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven." (NRSV)
[78] Janz, *Angelic Doctor*, 69-70; WA 34.II.257: " Dionysius et alii doctores aliter scripserunt de angelis ut Thomas, quomodo angeli coram deo **et kummern sich unser nicht.** Sic non scriptura loquitur de eis."
[79] "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." (NRSV)
[80] WA 34.II.279: "Angelorum officium **sol sien huten,** ut hodie audistis esse vigiles. Ideo **sol mans nennen wechter, huter, Bischoff gegen menschen, gegen Gott huebsche, froeliche geister. Wie** custodiunt? 'in omnibus viis'. **Sind das nicht trefflich, herrlich wort?** Multi scripserunt philosophi de angelis, Thomas, Dionysius, sed **haben den schweis geschrieben,** nemo **hat angerurt** quod hic in ps."
[81] I.57.2, *Summa Theologiae* 9.126: "… nullus potest custodire quod non cognoscit. Sed angeli custodiunt homines singulares, secundum illud *Psal. 90, Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in ominubus viis tuis*. Ergo angeli cognoscunt singularia."; I.113.1, Ibid., 15.50: "… est quod dicitur in *Psalmo: Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis*."; I.113.3, Ibid., 15.56: "… est quod in *Psalm*. custodia hominum attribuitur Angelis, quorum ordo est infimus, secundum Dionysium."

communicate, when right here in Scripture, one can find them communicating in ordinary human speech.[82] Here, rather than the *opusculum*, Luther is most probably referring to the *Summa Theologiae*,[83] wherein Aquinas composed a question on this very topic. And again, such a specific reference implies a much deeper knowledge of that work than one might assume.[84]

Four short references may not seem like anything significant when compared to the enormous entirety of Luther's work. However, Janz does point out something very significant for our purposes. In Luther's day, Aquinas's various *opusculum* were not well-known or read or cited, even in the works of professed Thomists. Luther's obvious familiarity with one of them — *De Substantiis Separatis* — is therefore all the more surprising. Furthermore, given the lack of attention that this work had received, even from Gabriel Biel, one can assume that Luther's knowledge thereof came to him firsthand, that he sought this specific work out and read it.[85] That is what is most significant for our purposes here: that one of the works of Thomas Aquinas that Martin Luther chose to seek out and read was a text that was not well-known by Aquinas's adherents. Even more importantly, that text was on angelology. Luther's dedication to the topic is clear.

I.1.8. Gabriel Biel (1420/25-1495 CE)

Of all the nominalist sources that Martin Luther came into contact with, none exerted the influence that Gabriel Biel did. From early in his formation, Luther read Biel,

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[82] WA 45.351: "S. Thomas scripsit magnum librum **und seer speculirt**, quomodo angeli colloquantur **und gestalt**, sed non assecutus. Sed seipsos revelant non in sua angelica substantia et voce, sed **in menschlicher sprach, rede, gesang** …"
[83] I.107, *Summa Theologiae* 14.106-19: "De locutionibus angelorum."
[84] Janz, *Angelic Doctor*, 70.
[85] Ibid., 106.

and was able to quote him from memory even in his old age, according to Philip Melanchthon.[86]

Still, when it came to the angels, Biel was often content to just summarize Aquinas's conclusions, despite his own nominalist allegiance. His teachings on God and creation are certainly nominalist and distant from any sense of Thomist doctrine. While Biel cites Aquinas much less frequently in this discussion than he does in others, when he speaks of angels in that context, he quotes and summarizes Thomas extensively.[87]

Biel's major works could be easily found in the University library. In addition to his *Sentences* commentary, volumes of his sermons[88] and his *Sacri canonis misse expoitio*[89] were also available for consultation.

I.2. What are the Angels?

Having examined Luther's connections to the notable figures of the prior angelological tradition, the question with which we begin our treatment of the sources of Luther's angelology is, "What are angels, according to the theologians from which he most likely drew?"

I.2.1. Augustine

We begin with Augustine. He himself had a tradition from which to draw, and as his familiarity with previous Christian writings grew, so did the complexity of his angelology. The works in which he treats angels at any length include *De Civitate Dei*,

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[86] Janz, *Angelic Doctor*, 100.
[87] John L. Farthing, *Thomas Aquinas and Gabriel Biel: Interpretations of St. Thomas Aquinas in German Nominalism on the Eve of the Reformation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), 13.
[88] Kusukawa, *Library Catalogue,* #422 & #423a.
[89] Ibid., #405b.

De Genesi ad litteram, and *De trinitate*.[90] On the other hand, in the *Enchiridion* (written at approximately the same time as these other works), Augustine hardly mentions the angels, save for a few short discussions. In this text in particular, he does not seem convinced of the need for any complexity in his angelology.[91] As Keck puts it:

> The attitude of Christian theologians towards the study of the angelic nature prior to the rise of scholasticism seems best exemplified by Augustine, who called speculations into such matters nothing more than a 'useful exercise for the intellect.' In his estimation, the questions were ultimately unworthy of extended contemplation. Thus he writes, 'For what is the necessity for affirming, or denying, or defining with accuracy on these subjects, and others like them, when we may without blame be entirely ignorant of them?'[92]

Nevertheless, Augustine is not completely silent on angelic matters. Even so, he argues that only through faith can one accept the existence of the angels. They are spiritual beings, called "angels" due to their office.[93] Their nature is such that they are immortal, yet mutable.[94] However, on the question of the necessity for an angel to have a body — despite, or perhaps in addition to, being a spiritual creature — Augustine was unable to produce a definitive answer. In *De libero arbitrio*, in 395 CE, he affirms that the angels have bodies. But by 408 CE, he is concerned that such a stance may conflict with Psalm 103:4, which clearly states that angels are spiritual creatures. Later in his career, in such works as *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine appears inclined towards the possibility of angelic bodies but does not wish to compel anyone towards his own view. As Pelz notes, Augustine believed that while such matters may be interesting upon which

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[90] Frederick Van Fleteren, "Angels," in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 20.
[91] David Keck, *Angels & Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 88.
[92] Ibid., 71-72.
[93] Van Fleteren, "Angels," 20-21.
[94] Ibid., 21.

to speculate, one must be careful to not actively contradict established theological truths.[95]

As to when exactly the angels were created, Augustine is likewise less than firm in his opinion. Obviously, the Creation account in Genesis does not mention them, strangely silent on the matter, given its careful recounting of the creation of the other creatures. Augustine decides, therefore, that the matter is up for speculation, commenting that if there was mention in the Scriptural account, it was under the name of either "heaven" or "light."[96] Certainly, he saw that several answers to this confusion were possible; in particular, that the angels had been created by God prior to His creation of the universe — or that they had been created at the same time. However, neither of these possibilities comprise any essentiality in one's understanding of the angels. Instead, what is important to Augustine is that angels are to be understood as being in no way co-eternal with God.[97]

What then does Augustine say about their creation and existence? He does touch on angelic creation when considering Genesis, speculating that God's creation of heaven in Genesis 1:1 establishes spiritual beings, whereas the creation of light in 1:3 is the moment when those beings turn to the light, establishing them as angels in service to

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[95] Karl Pelz, "Augustinus über die Natur der Engel," in *Die Engellehre des heiligen Augustinus* (Münster: Aschendorffschen Buchdruckerei, 1912), 12-4.
[96] Keck, *Angels & Angelology*, 17; *City of God* XI.9, NPNF I.2.209-10; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei,* 2 vols., (Turnholt: Brepols, 1955), 2.328: "Vbi de mundi constitutione sacrae litterae loquuntur, non euidenter dicitur, utrum uel quo ordine creati sint angeli; sed si praetermissi non sunt, uel caeli nomine, ubi dictum est: *In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram*, uel potius lucis huius, de qua loquor, significati sunt."
[97] Keck, *Angels & Angelology*, 23; *City of God* XI.32, NPNF I.2.224; *De Civitate Dei*, 2.352: "Proinde ut uolet quisque accipiat, quod ita profundum est, ut ad exercitationem legentium a fidei regula non abhorrentes plures possit generare sententias, dum tamen angelos sanctos in sublimibus sedibus non quidem Deo coaeternos, sed tamen de sua sempiterna et uera felicitate securos et certos esse nemo ambigat."

God. The term "angel," therefore, comes to be the designation of all the beings of the heavenly city, which was likewise created on the first day.[98]

Though they are the greatest creatures in God's creation, the angels were not created in a state of perpetual happiness. Through their own wills and with God's help, the good angels were brought into a state of perpetual goodness and perseverance in the truth. Furthermore, from that point forward they have the capability to see and worship God directly, as well as being able to live in the City of God. Augustine turns to Genesis 1:4, in which God divides the darkness from the light, as a possible allusion to this event.[99] Though they thus possess "true wealth" and "the perfection of justice," the angels nevertheless derive all of their powers from God, and work to fulfill God's will with a precision and perfection that is beyond human capability to even understand, much less imitate. Despite their obvious power and glory, the angels also accept neither sacrifices nor worship, instead teaching that such things should be offered to God alone. Descending and ascending upon the Son of Man as they do, they still do not receive the gift of Christ's death in the way that humanity does. However, they do wait receive believers into heaven. As to their exact numbers, Augustine chooses not to speculate, saying only that the angels are numerous.[100]

Augustine does comment on the nature of angelic knowledge, however, positing several types. Since their intelligence does not rely on the limitation of physical matter, they are able to perceive and understand God directly, in contrast to humanity. And thus, they know creatures through the *rationes aeternae*, and through those creatures themselves. Lastly, the angels, "refer their knowledge of creatures to praise of God."

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[98] Van Fleteren, "Angels," 21.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid. For more on the angels' instruction on proper worship, see below.

Augustine's formulation of these three kinds of knowledge comes from the creation account itself, with its refrain of day, night, and morning — as well as possible influence by Plotinus.[101]

As to the angelic organization, Augustine follows Paul in positing 7 different types: Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Powers, Principalities, and Virtues. They can be found in groups that he labels as choirs and legions — but that is as far as his organization goes, in stark contrast to other authors that come after him, such as Pseudo-Dionysius.[102] Nevertheless, Augustine remains noncommittal as to the exact delineations and divisions between the different choirs, sometimes even collapsing them or confusing them.[103]

Though these ruminations on angelic being in no way comprise the extent of Augustine's contribution to angelology (as we will see), they do appear at first glance to be somewhat limited. However, his work unquestionably influenced the theologians that followed after him, whether they agreed with him or not. Both his compilation and distillation of previous angelology and his own interpretation of the angelic creation and their early existence laid a foundation for the great flowering of angelology in medieval Christianity. When they began considering questions they felt important — when/if the angels had been raised up and confirmed by God, the reasons for the fall of the evil angels, and the nature of angelic knowledge — the medievals found that Augustine had already been there.[104]

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[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Pelz, "Augustinus," 10.
[104] Keck, *Angels & Angelology*, 16.

I.2.2. Chrysostom

The next theologian to consider is John Chrysostom. Like Augustine, Chrysostom shows a firm belief that angels do, in fact, exist — but does not seem too concerned with unraveling the complexities of that existence. Thus, he is content to casually remark that they do not sleep,[105] that they have faces that can be covered by their wings,[106] and even that they have no knees![107]

Also like Augustine, Chrysostom's focus was not on the nature of the angels *per se*, but rather on something else. In his case, Chrysostom was concerned with responding to the Anomoean heresies,[108] and therefore placed his emphasis on the fact that angels are creatures. As creatures, the angels are completely unable to know God in God's essence. The gap between creature and Creator, furthermore, is best understood through contemplation of God's ability to instantaneously create such powerful creatures in such numbers with the merest usage of the divine will. Conscious of this divide, the angels act in ways that are proper to their being: worship and glorification of God, rather than speculation about God's essence. Even the knowledge possessed by the Cherubim[109] is insufficient for a full understanding of God.[110] Coming at the issue from a different direction, in his *Homily 3 on Hebrews*, Chrysostom repurposes discussion of angelic

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[105] R. M. M. Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy: A Study in Their Development in Syria and Palestine from the Qumran Texts to Ephrem the Syrian* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 69; NPNF I.14.51: "… in the case of angels, we must understand that by reason of their pure and sleepless nature, they do nothing else [than have God in their thoughts] …"

[106] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy,* 20; Chrysostom, *Homilies on Eutropius* II.9, NPNF I.9.257: "Angels beheld Him and trembled, the Cherubim veiled themselves with their wings, in awe."

[107] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy,* 92; Chrysostom, *Homilies on I Corinthians*, NPNF I.12.189: "[Paul] doth not say these things as if he attributed to angels knees and bones, far from it …"

[108] Also known as the Eunomians, an offshoot of Arianism. Their main argument was that the Father and the Son were of *completely different* substance, not merely of *similar* substance.

[109] Perhaps unexpectedly — particularly given the ranking systems of the better-known angelologists who came after him — Chrysostom ranks the Cherubim highest. More on this below.

[110] Pak-Wah Lai, "John Chrysostom and the Hermeneutics of Exemplar Portraits" (PhD diss., Durham University, 2010), 61.

ontology to clearly show the ways in which the Son is different from the angels. Thus, he can speak of the Son as "entirely deserving of the Father's privileges while the 'office of the angels' is simply defined as to 'minister to God for our salvation.'"[111] So while we do not see much about the facts and qualities of angelic existence, we do find his thoughts on the angelic office as ministers — which we will discuss in more detail below.

As to his thoughts on the nature of any angelic hierarchy, scholarship is somewhat divided as to the emphasis that should be placed on any ordering Chrysostom might have provided. Tuschling comments that while Chrysostom does present a list of names of angelic orders in his *Homilies on Matthew* — angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, whole host, royal palaces, tabernacles — this does not seem to have any real stress behind it as a ranking system. Chrysostom was just employing a rhetorical flourish.[112]

Lai, on the other hand, refers to this same list and argues that it does indicate some sort of ranking system. He also points out that Chrysostom asserts that even the entries on this list may not be the sum total of the number of the angelic orders, that the number of angels is countless, and that their 'tribes' are as well. So while these comments may seem to do so, Lai contends that they do not truly indicate that Chrysostom had any sense of formalized hierarchy. That Chrysostom does believe in some sort of ranking amongst the angels is evident, however, in that he maintains that the Seraphim are

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[111] Ibid., 62.
[112] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy,* 69; NPNF I.10.324: "But of what manner of light is He speaking, and what can this light be? Not this, that is sensible; but another far better, which shows us Heaven, the angels, the archangels, the cherubim, the seraphim, the thrones, the dominions, the principalities, the powers, the whole host, the royal palaces, the tabernacles."

actually inferior to the Cherubim, due to the fact that the Cherubim are the ones who draw more closely to the throne of God.[113]

I.2.3. Pseudo-Dionysius

Turning to Pseudo-Dionysius, we find that he believed that what makes the angels angels is two-fold: first, these beings have the best and deepest participation in the divine; and second, they in turn pass those revelations on to all who come afterwards, revelations which would otherwise be unable to be understood. Thus, they are granted the title of 'angel' or 'messenger.'[114] The angels are also incorporeal, since they belong to a hierarchy that is far beyond our world, stretching into the conceptual; and due to their superior intelligence, they "have their own permitted conceptions of God," in contrast with humanity's need for symbols.[115]

As he conceives it, the angels are organized into a strict hierarchy of three groupings of three ranks each: the first rank, consisting of the seraphim, cherubim, and thrones; the second rank, consisting of the dominions, powers, and authorities; and the third rank, consisting of the principalities, archangels, and angels.[116] So why does

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[113] Lai, "Hermeneutics," 59.

[114] Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Celestial Hierarchy," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 157: "They have the first and the most diverse participation in the divine and they, in turn, provide the first and the most diverse revelations of the divine hiddenness. That is why they have a preeminent right to the title of angel or messenger, since it is they who pass on to us these revelations which are so far beyond us."

[115] Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Ecclesial Hierarchy," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 197: "Of course, as I have said already, those beings and those orders which are superior to us are also incorporeal. Their hierarchy belongs to the domain of the conceptual and is something out of this world. We see our human hierarchy, on the other hand, as our nature allows, pluralized in a great variety of perceptible symbols lifting us upward hierarchically until we are brought as far as we can be into the unity of divinization. The heavenly beings, because of their intelligence, have their own permitted conceptions of God. For us, on the other hand, it is by way of the perceptible images that we are uplifted as far as we can be to the contemplation of what is divine. Actually, it is the same one whom all one-like beings desire, but they do not participate in the same way in this one and the same being. Rather, the share of the divine is apportioned to each in accordance with merit."

[116] Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Celestial Hierarchy," 160-1: "… the first group is forever around God and is said to be permanently united with him ahead of any of the other and with no intermediary. Here, then, are

Scripture so often refer to them collectively as simply "angels?" His answer is based on the idea that the higher ranks of angels possess all of the powers and knowledge of the lower ranks, whereas the lower possess nothing of the higher. Thus, it is entirely proper to call the higher ranks "angels" as they have all the powers of the lowest ranks. Conversely, the lower ranks should never be referred to as "seraphim" or such, since they have none of the attributes of whatever other rank to which they are compared. But the simpler explanation is that each angel has the power — to larger or smaller extent — to perform the operation of illumination and to conform themselves to the divine, which is the main attribute of the angels, as we have seen.[117]

In contrast to other authors, Pseudo-Dionysius does not speak of when the angels were created. As to the numbers of the angels, he only makes the point that the immense numbers mentioned in Scripture reveal that the true number is inconceivable, surpassing the entirety of physical numbering.[118]

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the most holy 'thrones' and the orders said to possess many eyes and wings, called in Hebrew the 'cherubim' and 'seraphim.' … The second group… is made up of 'authorities,' 'dominions,' and 'powers.' And the third, at the end of the heavenly hierarchies, is the group of 'angels,' 'archangels,' and 'principalities.'"

[117] Ibid., 159-60: "Now in every sacred rank the higher orders have all the illuminations and powers of those below them and the subordinate have none of those possessed by their superiors. Theologians give the name 'angel' also to the highest and holiest orders of the heavenly beings by virtue of the fact that they too make known the enlightenment proceeding from the Deity. But if one is talking about the last order among the heavenly beings it would be silly to give to the members of this the title of principalities or thrones or seraphim since they lack participation in these latter supreme powers. However, just as this order lifts our own inspired hierarchs up toward whatever light of God is known to it, so the sacred power of the highest beings lifts up the subordinate members of the angelic hierarchy toward the divine. If scripture gives a shared name to all the angels, the reason is that all the heavenly powers hold as a common possession an inferior or superior capacity to conform to the divine and to enter into communion with the light coming from God."

[118] Ibid., 181: "I think we also ought to reflect on the tradition in scripture that the angels number a thousand times a thousand and ten thousand times ten thousand. These numbers, enormous to us, square and multiply themselves and thereby indicate clearly that the ranks of the heavenly beings are innumerable. So numerous indeed are the blessed armies of transcendent intelligent beings that they surpass the fragile and limited realm of our physical numbers."

I.2.4. Bernard of Clairvaux

We may now move on to the Medieval period by beginning with Bernard of Clairvaux's thoughts on the nature of angelic existence. The truth of the matter, however, is that Bernard also was not prolific in his discussion of such matters, often merely repeating the opinions of Augustine or Gregory. As was true of the science of angelology in general in the centuries before him, Bernard did not seem inclined to innovate.[119] In fact, he happily asserted that, "Now we prefer to know nothing more than that which we already know by faith."[120]

And so, Bernard's ruminations are limited in number and scope. While he did, on occasion, comment on a few of the basic questions of angelic existence and of angelic characteristics, such thoughts were still brief and without metaphysical content. In continuity with the Church fathers (as we have already seen), angels were not important to Bernard due to the mere fact of their existence. Rather, they mattered to him due to the part they play in the larger soteriological drama being played out in Creation.[121]

Yet, on the occasion Bernard did choose to spend any time in discussion on the being of the angels, he did so in a way that could be called almost 'creedal.' From *On Consideration*:

> [W]e have ascertained through reading and we hold through faith that the citizens there [the heavenly Jerusalem] are powerful spirits glorious and blessed; they are distinct persons, arranged in order of dignity, established from the beginning, in their order of rank, perfect in what they are, ethereal in body, endowed with immortality, not created impassible but made so, that is by grace not nature; pure of mind, with kind disposition,

[119] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 72.
[120] Ibid., 81.
[121] Ibid., 85; "De Consideratione ad Eugenium papam," in *Sämtliche Werke: lateinisch/deutsch*, v. 1, ed. Gerhard B. Winkler (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1990), 1.782: "Nil autem malumus scire, quam quae fide iam scimus."

> devoutly pious, wholly chaste, individual but unanimous, secure in peace, formed by God and dedicated to divine praise and service.[122]

In contrast to the majority of scholastics who were his contemporaries and those who would follow him, Bernard employed no tools of formal logic or argumentation or analysis in his consideration of what the angels are.[123] Fully dissecting the mysteries that surround the angels would undermine the whole purpose and design of faith, he believed, and could even be dangerous — a viewpoint that formed the basis of his objections to the work of Abelard and other scholastics.[124]

Since he believed that an angelic hierarchy exists, Bernard also presented his own scheme. However, his system did not follow the Dionysian rankings, but that of the other, alternative source for the medievals on this notion: Gregory the Great. This choice might also have served as an implicit critique of the scholastics, who were enamored of the Aeropagite.[125] Again from *On Consideration*:

> God loves in the Seraphim as charity, knows in the Cherubim as truth, is seated in the Thrones as equity, reigns in the Dominations as majesty, rules in the Principalities as principle, guards in the Powers as salvation, acts in the Virtues as strength, reveals in the Archangels as light, assists in the Angels as piety.[126]

Compared with Pseudo-Dionysius's hierarchy, some distinct differences become visible. In the Dionysian order, the path of revelation and interaction is completely linear: each

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[122] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Five Books On Consideration: Advice to a Pope*, trans. John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Kennen (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 146; "De Consideratione," 1.782 & 784: "Et primo quidem cives spiritus esse illic potentes, gloriosos, beatos, distinctos in personas, dispositos in dignitates, ab initio stantes in ordine suo, perfectos in genere suo, corpore aethereos, immortalitate perpetuos, impassibilies non creatos, sed factos, id est gratia, non natura; mente puros, affectu benignos, religione pios, castimonia integros, unanimitate individuos, pace securos, a Deo conditos, divinis laudibus et obsequiis deditos."
[123] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 85.
[124] Ibid., 78.
[125] Ibid., 57.
[126] Steven Chase, *Angelic Spirituality: Medieval Perspectives on the Ways of Angels* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), 107. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*, 154; "De Consideratione," 1.792 & 794: "Sed Deus amat ut caritas, novit ut veritas, sedet ut aequitas, dominatur ut maiestas, regit ut principium, tuetur ut salus, operatur ut virtus, revelat ut lux, assistit ut pietas."

rank acts in the same basic manner upon the next step lower, until only the lowest step interacts with the material world, whether that interaction is with objects or humanity. The angels of Bernard's order, by contrast, fulfill different functions within their ranking scheme, and are much more likely to directly interact with the physical world and its denizens. Furthermore, Pseudo-Dionysius's main concern was with the process and flow of illumination, and saw the angels as agents in that work. Bernard's focus was on the ways in which the ministries of the different kinds of angels contact and serve humanity.[127]

I.2.5. Peter Lombard

We now turn to Peter Lombard, who writes that God created two kinds of rational beings: the angels, pure spirits who are not necessarily united to bodies; and souls, which are.[128] As to whether or not the angels possess their own bodies of air, or assume new bodies when they appear to humanity, Lombard is content to repeat the arguments of Augustine without making any real argument of his own — in fact, he characterizes such questions as "exceedingly profound and obscure."[129]

Despite the fact that they are beings of pure spirit, Lombard is also careful to point out that the angels were not created before other creatures, presenting arguments from both Augustine, who stated that the angels were not created before time, and Jerome, who postulated a 'time before time' in which the angels existed. Lombard sides with Augustine, and writes that they were created alongside all other aspects of Creation —

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[127] Keck, *Angels and Angelology,* 58.
[128] II.1.4; Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae,* 2 vols. (Rome: Grottaferrata, 1971-81), 1.332: "Eam que hoc modo distinxit, ut pars in sui puritate permaneret nec corpori uniretur, scilicet angeli; pars corpori iungeretur, scilicet animae. Distincta est itaque rationalis creatura in incorpoream et corpoream …"
[129] II.8.3; Ibid., 1.368: "Ceterum haec velut nimis profunda atque obscura…"

heaven, earth, even time itself.[130] Furthermore, the angels were created at the same time as the empyrean heaven in which they dwelt prior to Satan's fall,[131] and that all of the angels were created good.[132]

On the subject of the fall, Lombard relies heavily on Hugh of St. Victor, writing that the angels who remained with God had been given 'cooperating' grace (*gratia cooperans)*, which impelled them from a basic goodness towards the perfect goodness of complete love and submission to God.[133] Even so, this grace should not be understood as conferring beatitude upon the angels. Lombard writes that what this grace did was allow them to live in a "blessed manner." The angels then merit true blessedness by virtue of the services they perform for humanity at God's behest.[134] Having been so confirmed, the good angels are no longer capable of sinning, says Lombard, relying again on Augustine.[135]

And despite what both Isidore and Gregory might argue, Lombard writes that the angels remain capable of growth and change after their confirmation. According to him, after the angels' confirmation, the beatitude that they enjoy is ever increasing, as they

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[130] II.2.3; Ibid., 1.338: "Simul ergo cum tempore facta est corporalis et spiritualis creatura, et simul cum mundo; nec fuit antea angelica creatura quam mundus, quia, ut ait Augustinus …"
[131] II.2.4; Ibid., 1.340: "Ex his liquet quod in empyreo omnes angeli fuerunt ante quorundam ruinam, simul que creati sunt angeli cum caelo empyreo et cum informi materia omnium corporalium."
[132] II.3.4; Ibid., 1.347: "Ex praedictis igitur liquet angelos omnes bonos esse creatos, et post creationem quosdam cecidisse a bono quod habuissent, si perstitissent."
[133] II.5.4; Ibid., 1.353: "Data est ergo angelis qui perstiterunt cooperans gratia, per quam conversi sunt ut Deum perfecte diligerent. Conversi ergo sunt a bono quod habebant non perdito, ad maius bonum quod non habebant; et est facta ista conversio per gratiam cooperantem libero aribitrio; quae gratia aliis qui ceciderunt apposita non fuit."
[134] II.5.6; Ibid., 1.354: "… non tunc eis datum esse bonum quo mererentur, sed quo feliciter fruerentur. Quod autem tunc in praemium acceperunt, per obsequia nobis exhibita ex dei obedientia et reuerentia mereri dicunt; et ita praemium praecessit merita. Et hoc mihi magis placere fateor."
[135] II.7.3; Ibid., 1.360-1: "Ecce hic insinuatur quod angeli ante confirmationem peccare potuerunt, sed post confirmationem non possunt; et quod potuerunt, fuit eis ex libero arbitrio, quod est eis naturale; quod uero modo non possunt peccare, non est eis ex natura, id est ex libero arbitrio, sed ex gratia: Ex qua gratia etiam est ut ipsum liberum arbitrium iam non possit seruire peccato." Also note that both Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 of Distinction 7 are formed entirely from complete quotations from Augustine.

grow more in love of God and service to humanity.[136] Furthermore, they understand the incarnation of the Son more completely after its occurrence in history than they did beforehand.[137] The key distinction for him is that, while the angels certainly do grow in knowledge of exterior things after their confirmation, such as the sacraments or the Incarnation, they will never grow in their understanding of the Trinity.[138]

I.2.6. Bonaventure

Our next theologian from the medieval period to consider is Bonaventure, known as the "Seraphic Doctor." And almost immediately, the differences between him and Bernard of Clairvaux — on the subject of what and who the angels are — become apparent. Certainly, as did Bernard,[139] he believed that proof for the existence of angels was readily available. But Scripture was not the only source for such information. Previously, philosophers and theologians had looked at the universe and seen such proof in the motion of the planets. Bonaventure, however, looked at the universe and saw the perfection that God had ordained for it, a perfection based in God's manifestation of God's own power, wisdom, and goodness. Thus, he reasoned, in such a perfect universe, there must be three kinds of beings: those that are purely physical (the material creation), those that are purely spiritual (the angels), and those that are a combination of the two

[136] II.11.2; Ibid., 1.381-2: "Quod in meritis proficiant atque quotidie magis ac magis mereantur, quibusdam uidetur, ex eo quia quotidie hominum utilitatibus inseruiunt eorum que profectibus student. Quibus etiam nihilominus uidetur quod et in praemio proficiant, scilicet in cognitione et dilectione dei. Licet enim, ut aiunt, in confirmatione beatitudinem acceperint aeternam atque perfectam, augetur tamen quotidie eorum beatitudo, quia magis ac magis diligunt atque cognoscunt. Caritas eorum meritum est et praemium nunc. Et est eorum caritas, qua deum et nos diligunt, et meritum et praemium: Meritum, quia per eam et obsequia ex ea nobis impensa merentur et in beatitudine proficiunt; et ipsa eadem est praemium, quia ea beati sunt."
[137] II.11.2; Ibid., 1.382: "Ex quibus apparet quod mysterium uerbi incarnati plenius cognouerunt angeli post impletionem quam ante. Et sicut in cognitione huius mysterii profecerunt, ita dicunt eos in deitatis cognitione proficere."
[138] II.11.2; Ibid., 1.383: "Profecerunt tamen in scientia rerum exteriorum, sicut in cognitione sacramenti incarnationis et huiusmodi; sed non in contemplatione deitatis, quia trinitatem in unitate atque unitatem in trinitate non plenius intelligunt siue intellecturi sunt, quam ab ipsa confirmatione perceperunt."
[139] In *On Consideration*, as noted above.

(humanity). A universe without all of these would not be perfect, and thus, Bonaventure asserts that angels are therefore *requiritur*.[140]

His answer as to the 'when' of the angelic creation follows the same path, relying more on his understanding of cosmology rather than the creation account in Genesis. According to Gilson, Bonaventure believed it to be fitting that God would produce examples of all the possible types of creatures at the first moment of creation: 1) the angels, as the first purely spiritual creatures, 2) the empyrean heaven, as the first active corporeal substance, 3) matter, as the first passive corporeal substance, and 4) time, as the first measure. Likewise, God's order for creation mandated this quadruple, simultaneous creation. The angels, as the supreme, most perfect creatures, would have been created first. But they were also created to conform to this order, the perfection of which required them to occupy a place, so that they may be in proper relation to other things. Thus, the empyrean heaven was created to give them a place in which to be. But if the empyrean heaven remained empty, it would remain disordered; thus, corporeal matter was created to fill it. Similarly, created beings necessarily exist according to a duration that can be measured, and so time was brought into existence.[141] "Thus the angels rightly appeared

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[140] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 83; II.d1.p2.a1.q2, Bonaventure, "Liber II Sententiarum," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 2.42: "Dicendum, quod ad perfectionem universi hoc triplex genus substantiae requiritur; et hoc propter triplicem perfectionem universi, quae attenditur in amplitudine *ambitus*, sufficientia *ordinis*, influentia *bonitatis*, in quibus tribus exprimit in causa triplicem perfectionem, videlicet *potentiae, sapientiae et bonitatis*." Cf. Bonaventure, "Breviloquium," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 5.224: "… quia primum principium, hoc ipso quod primum, omnia de nihilo produxit; ideo non tantum *prope nihil*, sed etiam *prope se*; non tantum substantiam a se longinquam, scilicet naturam corpoream, producere debuit, verum etiam propinquam; et haec est substantia intellectualis et incorporea …"

[141] II.d2.p1.a2.q3, "Liber II Sententiarum," 2.68: "Ad praedictorum intelligentiam notandum, quod, sicut extrahitur a Glossa, quatuor fuerunt primo creata, scilicet caelum empyreum, angelica natura, materia et tempus.

Huius autem ratio duplex potest assignari: *una*, quia in principio debuerunt prima in omni genere creari, scilicet in rebus et mensuris, et in rebus corporalibus et spiritualibus, et in corporalibus activis et passivis. Quoniam igitur prima inter substantias spirituales est Angelus, prima inter substantias corporales

first by reason of their proper perfection, and it is in consequence of a concomitant necessity that their place, the content of their place and the duration of the whole were created simultaneously."[142]

While the angels may have been created with a certain amount of perfection, they did not remain that way, and Bonaventure spent some time considering this occurrence as well. He writes:

> We must know that, at the very instant of their creation, the angels were endowed with four perfections: simplicity of essence; individuality of person; rationality implying memory, intelligence, and will; and freedom of choice for the election of good and the rejection of evil. These four main attributes are accompanied by four others: virtuosity in action, dedication in service, acuteness in understanding, and immutability in the choice of good or evil.[143]

This last characteristic proved to be the most problematic. The angels who fell, he posits, suffered from the sin of pride,[144] but the angels who remained good were confirmed by

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activas est empyreum, et prima inter passivas est materia elementorum, et prima inter mensuras est tempus, quia non tantum dicit mensuram durationis, sed etiam egressionis: ideo haec quatuor dicuntur primo creata.

Alia ratio potest reddi, quod substantia spiritualis angelica primum debuit fieri tanquam caput et minus dependens, et cum facta fuit, simul habuit distinctionem et *ordinem*; sed ordinem existentiae non habuit nisi in aliquo *continente*: ergo simul factum est caelum empyreum supremum corporum, et ideo capacissimum. Et *rursus*, cum non posset esse vacuum, necesse fuit, fieri materiam corporalem sive molem; et quia omnis productio est in aliqua mensura, haec tria de necessitate consequitur tempus."

[142] Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure,* trans. Dom Illtyd Trethowan and Frank J. Sheed (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), 220.

[143] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 34; Bonaventure, "The Breviloquium," in *The Works of Bonaventure*, trans. José de Vinck, 5 vols. (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960-70), 2.86; "Breviloquium," 5.224: "Sciendum est igitur, quod Angelis a primordio suae conditionis quatuor sunt attributa, scilicet *simplicitas essentiae, personalis discretio*, propter rantionem insitam *memoria, intelligentia et voluntas,* et *libertas arbitrii* ad eligenda bona et respuenda mala. — Haec autem quatuor attributa principalia alia quatuor comitantur, scilicet *virtuositas* in operando, *officiositas* in ministrando, *perspicacitas* in congnoscendo et *immutabilitas* post electionem sive in bono, sive in malo."

[144] II.d5.a1.q1, "Liber II Sententiarum," 2.146: "Ad hoc notandum, quod aliqui voluerunt dicere ad praedictas rationes et auctoritates, quod diabolus simul tempore peccavit pluribus generibus peccatorum; naturaliter tamen et principaliter prae aliis peccatis fuit peccatum superbiae. Et sic respondent unica et brevi responsione ad omnia obiecta, quod verum concludunt. — Sed haec responsio nec *verum dicit*, nec *solvit*. Non *dicit verum*, quia, cum affectus diaboli simplex sit, sicut et intellectus, et intellectus non potest simul plura intelligere vel plures cogitationes habere, similiter nec affectus simul et in eodem instanti plura peccata committere, maxime quae spectant omnino ad diversas actiones, sicut infidelitas, superbia et invidia. *Praeterea*, esto quod vera esset, non *solvit*, quia praedictae rationes non tantum probant, quod praedicta peccata concomitentur superbiam, sed quod antecedant.

God and remained in glory.[145] Both sides had full knowledge of the consequences of their decisions (as Keck puts it, "their freedom, knowledge, and responsibility are inseparable and sufficient"),[146] yet the evil angels freely chose and fell. In addition to remaining in glory, the good angels remained in their hierarchies — a facet of the particular angel's nature, but now permanent due to God's act.[147] While the qualities of the angelic will are such that the evil angels will forever be evil, having made that first choice, the will of the good angels has been "completed and perfected" by their confirmation, a transformation from sinlessness to perfection.[148] On the question of whether or not the angels possessed full grace at the moment of their creation, Bonaventure — following in the same logic as his mentor, Alexander of Hales, as well as Hugh of St. Victor — argued that they did not. However, he did not completely discount the possibility that they were created with some

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Et ideo aliter est dicendum, quod est loqui de peccato quantum ad triplicem statum, scilicet quantum ad inchoationem, consummationem et confirmationem. Peccatum diaboli *initiatum* est in *praesumtione*, statim enim, ut suam vidit pulcritudinem, praesumsit; *consummatum* est in *ambitione*, quia praesumens de se appetiit quod omnino supra se fuit et ad quod pervenire non potuit; sed *confirmatum* est *invidiae et odii* aversione, quia ex quo obtinere non potuit quod appetiit, ideo invidere coepit et affectu odii contraire. Et in hoc firmatus est, quia hoc omnino ipsum a Deo separavit et perfectum obstaculum posuit, sicut perfecta caritas perfecte Deo iungit.

Concedendae ergo sunt rationes primae, quod superbia fuerit primum peccatum; nam superbia praesumtionis et tumoris primum fuit generatione, superbia ambitionis primum fuit consummatione." Cf. "Breviloquium," 5.224: "Primus inter Angelos Lucifer, praesumens de privato bono, privatam appetiit excellentiam, volens aliis superferri; et ideo cecidit cum ceteris consentientibus sibi."

[145] "Breviloquium," 5.225: "Ratio autem ad intelligentiam praedictorum haec est: quia, cum Angeli propter expressam similitudinem et propinquitatem ad primum et summum principum habeant *intellectum deiformem* et *immutabilitatem* post consensum ex libertate arbitrii; divina superveniente gratia, ad summum bonum conversi, cum totaliter in Deum tenderent, per gloriam fuerunt *confirmati* pariter et *perfecti*…"

[146] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 24.

[147] "Breviloquium," 5.226: "Aguntur enim et agunt secundum ordinem hierarchicum in eis *initiatum* per naturam et *consummatum* per gloriam, quae, stabiliendo liberi arbitrii *vertibilitatem*, inllustravit *perspicacitatem*, ordinavit *officiositatem* et roboravit *virtutem*, secundum quatuor attributa superius nominata."

[148] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 24; "Breviloquium," 5.225: "De *confirmatione* vero Angelorum hoc tenendum est, quod sicut angeli *a Deo aversi* statim sunt obstinati per impoenitentiam; sic *ad Deum conversi* statim fuerunt *confirmati* per gratiam et gloriam in voluntate, perfecte *illuminati* in ratione secundum cognitionem *matutinam* et *vespertinam*, perfecte *fortificati* in virtute, sive *imperativa,* sive *exsecutiva*, et *perfecte ordinati* in operatione sive *contemplativa,* sive *ministrativa*; et hoc secundum *triplicem* hierarchiam, scilicet supermam, mediam et infimam."

manner of grace,[149] but he also maintained that his conclusion was the more likely of the two possibilities (as did Aquinas).[150]

Bonaventure also considers whether or not the angels assume true human bodies when they appear to humanity. They cannot create true human bodies, he states, because to do so would "violate not only the divine economy but also the laws of nature." Thus the bodies humanity perceives are merely effigies.[151] While they themselves have no need for physical bodies, the angels do understand that humanity would face great difficulty in trying to interact with them otherwise. So the angels take on these physical forms as a means to be more effective in their communication and ministry to humanity.[152]

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[149] II.d4.a1.q2, "Liber II Sententiarum," 2.133: "Fuerunt enim aliqui dicentes, quod Angeli omnes creati sunt in gratuitis gratum facientibus. — Et ratio, quae movit eos, fuit haec, ex parte Dei scilicet perfecta *liberalitas*, et ex parte creatorum *idoneitas*. Quia enim ab instanti creationis erant vasa et receptacula munda, et Deus est promptus suam gratiam impartiri, nisi habeat obstaculum ex parte suscipientis; non dimisit Deus illa ad momentum vacua, sed statim ut condidit, gratia illustravit. Et talia debuerunt de manu Dei exire receptacula, ut statim essent prompta in bonum usum. Unde sicut probabiliter coniiciunt aliqui, quod Deus fecerit arbores plenas fructibus et alia in statu nobilissimo et perfectissimo; sic etiam naturam Angeli ornaverit gratia a sui conditione, quae in primo usu bono sive victoria erat perpetuanda, et in prima deordinatione perpetualiter amittenda. — Haec est una positio, et satis videtur consona auctoritatibus Sanctorum, ut patet inspicienti."

[150] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 26; II.d4.a1.q2, Ibid., 2.133-4: "Fuerunt etiam alii, qui dixerunt, Angelos non habuisse gratiam gratum facientem ab instanti creationis, sed post. — Et ratio, quae eos movit, est dispositio naturae angelicae, quae fertur in id quod appetit sine retardatione. Unde sicut ex conversione ad malum ita profunde conversi sunt, ut non possent redire, sic, immo multo magis, ex conversione ad bonum sive ex habilitate ita bono totaliter adhaesissent, si gratiam habuissent, quod nunquam lapsi essent. Unde non videtur aliquo modo probabile, quod lucifer habuerit gratiam; et si ipse non habuit, cum inter ceteros esset excelsus, *a maiori* arguitur, nec alios habuisse a sui origine. Hanc positionem videtur acceptare Magister, hanc positionem communiter tenet doctores; et ita huic tanquam probabiliori et communiori concordandum est."

[151] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 32; II.d8.p1.a2.q1, Ibid., 2.214: "Dicendum, quod corpora assumta ab Angelis non habent veram formam et complexionem corporum humanorum, nec etiam organizationem completam, sed solum effigiem."

[152] Ibid.; II.d8.p1.a1.q2, Ibid., 2.212-13: "Dicendum, quod in Angelis duplex est vis, scilicet *contemplativa* et *administrativa*. Secundum *contemplativam* convertuntur ad Deum; et sic non indigent solatio assumti corporis. Secundum *administrativam* descendunt ad nos, et condescendunt nobis; et ut nobis congruentius condescendant, indigent solatio assumti corporis, indigent inquam, ad aliquas *operationes exercendas*, indigent ad *se ipsos manifestandos*, indigent *ad nosmetipsos laetificandos* sive confortandos. — Et ideo assumunt corpora sicut *instrumenta* vel organa ad operandum, sicut *signa* ad manifestandum, sicut *cooperimenta* vel habitacula ad conversandum. Unde corpus assumtum coniungitur illis sicut *instrumentum* motori, sicut *signum* significatori, sicut *habitaculum* inhabitatori."

The subject of the angelic hierarchy proves to be a source of minor hesitation for Bonaventure. For him, rather than a strict, methodical approach, the mere narration of the hierarchy itself and an explanation of what hierarchies are is sufficient. In this, he differs from Aquinas, who boldly applied his method to the task.[153] They both agreed on the actual order and name of ranks, however, and both also explained the conflict between the Dionysian and Gregorian ordering systems by arguing that while Dionysius explored the subject through the lens of discovering the nature of angelic being and essence, Gregory was more interested in the functions of the different levels.[154]

Nevertheless, Bonaventure does add his own innovations to the discussion. Given that the angels are the highest creatures, they should serve as the perfect image of creation itself. And since they can be arranged in three sets of three ranks within three hierarchies, their very organization mirrors the Trinity. This last was a frequent avenue for his exploration.[155] As Gilson describes it, Bonaventure organizes the nine orders according to each of the members of the Trinity in Themselves, as well as each Member present in the other Two:

> The order which corresponds to the Father in Himself is the order of the Thrones; that which corresponds to the Father in the Son is the order of Cherubim; that which corresponds to the Father in the Holy Spirit is that of Seraphim. The order of the Son in the Father is called that of Dominions, whose functions are to command and to reign. The order of the Son in Himself is called that of the Virtues, and that of the Son in the Holy Spirit that of the Powers. The order of the Holy Spirit in the Father is called that of the Principalities, that of the Holy Spirit in the Son that of the Archangels; the order of the Holy Spirit in Himself is called that of the Angels.[156]

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[153] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 56; II.d9.praenotata, Ibid., 2.237-41.
[154] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 57; II.d9.praenotata, Ibid., 2.240: "Quia igitur tam prima ratio quam secunda comprehendit haec tria, ideo omnes tractatores in hac distinctione concordant, scilicet Dionysius, qui distinguit hierarchias penes *essentialia*, et Gregorius, qui distinguit penes *officia*."
[155] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 54. Keck also notes that Aquinas was opposed to such readings, because he maintained that there is no hierarchical relationship between the Three Persons.
[156] Gilson, *Philosophy*, 242-3.

But Bonaventure also connects the nine orders of the angels with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, based on where they fall on the spectrum between active and contemplative:

> Thus laypeople, those most concerned with temporal affairs, correspond to the lowest orders of angels — the angels, archangels, and principalities.[157] Clerics, who must minister to laypeople as well as pray, correspond to the middle orders of angels — the powers, virtues, and dominations.[158] Finally, the religious occupy the highest triad, and here Bonaventure reveals his ultimate views on the roles of Francis and the Franciscans in the economy of salvation.[159]

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[157] XXII.18; Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 5.440: "In ordine *laicorum* est triplex ordo, scilicet sacrarum *plebium*, sacrorum *consulum*, sacrorum *principium*. *Restituam*, inquit, *iudices tuos, sicut a principio*. Boni enim principes habent bonos consiliarios. Et boni principes et boni consules habent bonas plebes, quia erudiunt illas. Econtra mali principes habent malos consiliarios, et per consequens male instruunt plebes. Malae plebes eligunt malos principes. — Primus ordo, scilicet plebium, respondet Angelis; secundus, scilicet consulum, Archangelis; tertius, scilicet principium, Principatibus."

[158] XXII.19; Ibid., 5.440: "Secundus ordo est *clericalis*, activus et contemplativus, qui et *pascere* debet et *contemplari*, ut sint medii inter Deum et plebem. *Omnis enim pontifex ex hominibus assumtus pro hominibus constituitur in iis quae sunt ad Deum, ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis*. Et hi sunt tres ordines: *ministerialis, sacerdotalis, pontificalis.* Ad hos reducuntur omnes, quia omnes aut sunt *ministrantes*, et sunt primi sex; aut sunt *sanctificantes* per verba; aut sunt *regentes* per eminentiam. — Primus ordo, scilicet *ministeralis*, respondet *Potestatibus*; ordo *sacerdotalis*, in quo est efficacia Sacramenti, est ordo *Virtutum*; ordo *pontificum* respondet *Dominationibus*, quia habet *iubere*, in quo est efficacia et virtus."

[159] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 147; XXII.20-23; Ibid., 5.440-1: "In ordine *contemplantium* sunt tres ordines respondentes supremae hierarchiae, quorum est divinis vacare. Intendunt autem divinis tripliciter: quidam per modum *supplicatorium*, quidam per modum *speculatorium*, quidam per modum *sursumactivum*. — Primo modo sunt illi qui se totos dedicant orationi et devotioni et divinae laudi, nisi aliquando, quando intendunt operi manuali seu labori ad sustenationem suam et aliorum, ut sunt ordo monasticus, sive albus, sive niger, ut Cisterciensis, Praemonstratensis, Carthusiensis, Grandimontensis, Canonici regulares. Omnibus istis datae sunt possesiones, ut orent pro illis qui dederunt. Huic respondent *Throni*.

Secundus est, qui intendit per modum *speculatorium* vel speculativum, ut illi qui vacant speculationi Scripturae, quae non intelligitur nisi ab animis mundis. Non enim potes noscere verba Pauli, nisi habeas spiritum Pauli; et ideo necesse est, ut sis sequestratus in deserto cum Moyse et ascendas in montem. — Huic respondent *Cherubim*. Hi sunt Praedicatores et Minores. Alii principaliter intendunt *speculationi*, a quo etiam nomen acceperunt, et postea *unctioni*. — Alii principaliter *unctioni* et postea *speculationi*. Et utinam iste amor vel unctio non recedat a Cherubim. — Et addebat, quod beatus Franciscus dixerat, quod volebat, quod fratres sui studerent, dummodo facerent prius, quam docerent. Multa enim scire et nihil gustare quid valet?

Tertius ordo est vacantium Deo secundum modum *sursumactivum*, scilicet ecstaticum seu excessivum. — Et dicebat: Quis enim iste est? Iste est ordo *seraphicus.* De isto videtur fuisse Franciscus. Et dicebat, quod etiam antequam haberet habitum, raptus fuit et inventus iuxta quandam sepem. — Hic enim est maxima difficultas, scilicet in *sursumactione*, quia totum corpus enervatur, et nisi esset aliqua consolatio Spritius sancti, non sustineret. Et in his consummabitur Ecclesia. Quis autem ordo iste futuris sit, vel iam sit, non est facile scire.

Primos ordo respondet *Thronis*; secundus *Cherubim*; tertius *Seraphim* ..."

For now, we leave it at that; a fuller explanation on this last will be found below. In the meantime, we turn to our last medieval thinker, Thomas Aquinas, to see how he compares to Bonaventure.

I.2.7. Thomas Aquinas

That Thomas Aquinas, himself known as the Angelic Doctor, should be concerned with establishing the existence of the angels should come as no surprise. By sorting through the various works in which he deals with the topic, James Collins has synthesized three main arguments upon which Aquinas rests, to which we now briefly turn.

First, much like Bonaventure,[160] Aquinas relies on an argument based on the perfection of the universe. As he reasons, given God's creation of the universe to be perfect, there is no such stratum of possibility that does not exist within that creation. If such were the case, then the creation would not be truly perfect. In our universe, given that existence as a substance is not dependent on union with a body, there must therefore exist a class of substances that are not necessarily joined to a body — so-called "separated substances." Thus, the angels exist as these "separated substances."[161] In addition, one of God's purposes in creating was as a means of showing forth God's own glory. And so, another way in which the universe is perfect is the extent to which it reflects God's own perfection. Given that God possesses intelligence, within Creation there must be creatures that are also intelligent. And so, "As immaterial substances, the

[160] As Keck points out on page 83 of his book.
[161] James D. Collins, *The Thomistic Philosophy of the Angels* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 28-30.

angels contribute to the glory of God in an eminent way, and as intelligent and voluntary agents, they bear a likeness to [God] in their operations as well as in their substance."[162]

Aquinas's next argument for the existence of angels follows from the argument of perfection, but instead is based on the fundamental ordering of the creatures that populate the universe. While the universe, considered as a whole, may be perfect, the creatures within it are not; each creature reflects a *degree* of God's perfection, not the entirety. Therefore, there is a continuous ordering within the universe, from least perfect to most perfect beings. And in this case, a creature is understood to be 'perfect' to the extent that that creature resembles God. Intelligence, as a characteristic of perfection, is superior to corporeality; in humanity, these two characteristics are united as a joining of a higher order with a lower order. Thus, at this point in the scheme of the order of the universe, humanity occupies the pinnacle of corporeal existence — and the nadir of intelligent existence. And so, "Some intellectual substances superior in the order of nature to the human soul and not united with bodies therefore exist."[163]

The third argument that Aquinas presents likewise follows from the two that precede it: an argument based on the nature of intellection itself. As has been established, humans, as intellectual beings, actually possess the weakest possible intelligence. This can be determined due to the fact that human intelligence is dependent on the body, especially the sensory organs, to perform intellectual acts. And again, if the schema of perfection is to be filled completely, there must exist an intellectual being whose intellect

[162] Ibid., 30-1.
[163] Ibid., 32-3.

is not dependent on sensory input or having a body at all. Such beings can only be the angels.[164]

But what sort of beings are these? Clearly, Aquinas believed that they were spiritual and incorporeal, and that this point was supported by Scripture, despite descriptions that would imply some sort of physical nature, such as the six wings of the seraphim in Isaiah 6 or Gabriel's clothing in Daniel 10. But the Bible also explicitly names the angels as spirits, such as in Psalm 103 and Hebrews 1:14 — leading Aquinas to conclude that it is fitting for the angels to be beings of pure spirit.[165] In the same way one should understand the manner that God is often described in Scripture, appearances and attributes such as those described above should only be understood as "likenesses," in regards to the angels, he writes, relying on Pseudo-Dionysius.[166]

In a similar way, when one describes an angel as being in a place, one should understand that this is not the same thing as describing a corporeal being as occupying a place. Aquinas's assertion is that an angel exists in a particular place by virtue of

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[164] Ibid., 36.

[165] Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Separate Substances: A Latin-English edition of a newly-established text based on 12 mediaeval manuscripts, with Introduction and notes,* trans. Francis J. Lescoe (Carthagena, OH: Messenger Press, 1963), 143-4: "Et ad hoc quidem quod angelos corporeos ponerent, movere potuerunt eos verba sacrae Scripturae quae quaedam corporalia angelis attribuere videtur cum eos et in loco corporali esse pronuntiet … Sed quod angeli incorporei sint sacrae Scripturae auctoritate probatur, quae eos spiritus nominat. … Sic igitur inconveniens est, secundum sacrae Scripturae sententiam, angelos corporeos esse." Cf. I.50.1 of Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Gilby, OP, gen. ed. 60 vols. (New York, NY: Blackfriars; McGraw-Hill, 1964-), 9.4-9.

[166] Ibid., 146-7: "Corporales vero figurae seu formae quae in sacra Scriptura interdum angelis attribuuntur, per quamdam similitudinem sunt intelligendae; quia sicut Dionysius dicit I capitulo *Coelestis Hierarchiae*, 'Non est possibile nostrae menti ad immaterialem illam sursum excitari coelestium hierarchiarum et imitationem et contemplationem, nisi secundum se materiali manuductione utatur'; sicut et de ipso Deo multa corporalia in Scripturis per quamdam similitudinem dicuntur; unde in XV capitulo *Coelestis Hierarchiae* Dionysius exponit quid spirituale significetur in angelis per omnes hujusmodi corporales figuras. Non solum hujusmodi formas corporeas per similitudinem de angelis asserit dici sed etiam quae pertinent ad affectionem sensitivi appetitus, ut per hoc detur intelligi quod non solum angeli non sunt copora, sed etiam quod non sunt spiritus corporibus uniti quae sensificando perficiant, ut sic in eis inveniantur operationes animae sensitivae." Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.51.1 & 2, 9.30-7.

exercising a portion of its power,[167] and that, because of this, angelic 'movement' should not be understood as traveling through corporeal space, but as a series of contacts of power in specific places.[168] Furthermore, the angels are divorced from any existence within time. Since they are beings of intellect without bodies, they exist as operations of intelligence. An intelligible, as an object, is itself an abstraction that does not exist within time, and the intellectual act that grasps it must also exist outside of time. In humanity, given that our intellectual acts must first grasp intelligibles that have been abstracted from phantasms, the intellectual act happens in time; in this case, however, time is merely accidental to the operation itself. But the angels have no need for phantasms, and thus, do not accrue the accident of existence within time.[169]

As to when, in the process of creation, the angels were brought into being, in *Summa Theologiae* I.61.1, Aquinas relies primarily on Augustine. Like him, the Angelic Doctor cites Psalm 148:2-5[170] as proof of God's creation of the angels, following that up with his own logical proof. But he also goes on to refer to Augustine explicitly on the question of when, writing that, far from being ignored in the creation account presented

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[167] Ibid., 148: "Quod autem angeli dicuntur esse in coelis aut in aliquibus aliis locis corporalibus non est intelligendum quod sint in eis corporali modo, scilicet per contactum dimensivae quantitatis, sed modo spirituali per quemdam contactum virtutis." Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.52.1, 9.44-7.

[168] Ibid., 149: "Et quia eodem modo competit alicui moveri in loco, et esse in loco, per consequens neque corporali modo angeli moventur in loco, sed motus eorum qui expreimitur in Scripturis, si referatur ad locom corporalem accipiendus est secundum successionem virualis contactus ad loca diversa …" Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.53.1 & 2, 9.54-65.

[169] Ibid., 160-1: "Adhuc, substantia quae est intellectualis naturae, a corpore separata, necesse est quod sit omnio a tempore absoluta. Natura enim uniuscujusque rei ex ejus operatione deprehenditur; operations vero ratio cognoscitur ex objecto. Intelligibile autem, inquantum hujusmodi, neque est hic neque nunc, sed abstractum sicut a loci dimensionibus ita et a temporum successione. Ipsa igitur intellectualis operatio, si per se consideretur, oportet quod sicut est abstracta ab omni corporali dimensione, ita etiam excedat omnem successionem temporalem. Et si alicui intellectuali operationi continuum vel tempus adjungatur, hoc non est nisi per accidens, sicut in nobis accidit inquantum intellectus noster a phantasmatibus abstrahit intelligibiles species, quas etiam in eis considerat; quod in substantia incorporea et intellectuali locum non potest habere. Relinquitur igitur quod hujusmodi substantiae operatio et per consequens substantia omnino sint extra omnem temporalem succesionem." Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.50.5, 9.26-7.

[170] "Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host! Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created." (NRSV)

in Genesis, the angels are called 'heaven' or 'light,' given corporeal names by Moses to curtail possible angel worship and idolatry on the part of the Israelites, whom Aquinas characterizes as predisposed to such things. Thus, rather than confusing them by discussing difficult concepts such as incorporeality, Moses meant to protect them by giving them something that could be easily understood.[171] Aquinas makes a similar argument in the *Treatise on Separated Substances*, written in approximately the same period as the *Summa,*[172] relying there not only on Augustine, but on the book of Job as well.[173] Still, whether the angels were created at the same time as corporeal beings is not much of an issue for Aquinas; he states that either opinion may be held without challenge, in I.61.3.[174] He is a bit more expansive on this idea in the *Treatise on Separated Substances*. There, he cites Gregory Nazianzen and Jerome (as he did in the *Summa*), as well as John of Damascus. These theologians taught that the angels were

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[171] Keck, *Angels and Angelology,* 19-20; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 9.206: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod Augustinus dicit, in II *De civ. Dei.*, quod angel non sunt praetermissi in illa primum rerum cratione, sed significantur nomine coeli, aut etiam lucis. Ideo autem vel praetermissi sunt, vel nominibus rerum corporalium significati, quia Moyses rudi populo loquebatur, qui nondum capere poterat incorpoream naturam. Et si eis fuisset expressum aliquas res esse super omnem naturam corpoream, fuisset eis occasio idoloatriae, ad qaum proni erant, et a qua Moyses eos praecipue revocare intendebat."

[172] Francis J. Lescoe, introduction to *Treatise on Separate Substances*, 3-6.

[173] Aquinas, *Treatise on Separate Substances*, 139-40: "Sed quia sacra Spritura *Gen. I* in serie creationis rerum de spiritualium substantiarum productione expressam mentionem non facit, ne populo rudi quibus lex proponebatur idolatriae daretur occasio si plures spirituales substantias super omnes corporales creaturas introduceret sermo divinus, non potest ex Scripturis canonicis expresse haberi quando creati fuerint angeli. Quod enim post corporalia creati non fuerint, etiam ratio manifestat, quia non fuit decens ut perfectiora posterius crearentur, et ex auctoritate sacrae Scripturae expresse colligitur. Dicitur enim *Job XXXVIII*, 'Cum me laudarent simul astra matutina et jubilarent omnes filii Dei'; per quos spirituales substantiae intelliguntur. … Sic igitur secundum sententiam Augustini simul cum corporealibus creata est spiritualis creatura quae significatur nomine coeli, cum in principio *Gen.* dicitur, 'In principio creavit Deus coelam et terram'. Formatio autem ejus et perfectio significatur in lucis productione, ut multipliciter prosequitur in II libro *Super Genesim ad litteram*."

[174] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 9.210: "Dicendum quod circa hoc invenitur duplex sanctorum doctorum sententia. Illa tamen probabilior videtur, quod angeli simul cum creatura corporea sunt creati. Angeli enim sunt quaedam pars universi; non enim constituunt per se unum universum, sed tam ipsi, quam creatura corporea, in consitutionem unius universi conveniunt. Quod apparet ex ordine unius creaturae ad aliam. Ordo enim rerum ad invicem est bonum universi. Nulla autem pars perfecta est a suo toto separata. Non est igitur probabile quod Deus, cujus *perfecta sunt opera*, ut dicitur *Deut. 32*, creaturam angelicam seorsum ante alias creaturas creaverit. Quamvis contrarium non sit reputandum erroneum, praecipue propter sententiam Gregorii Nazianzeni, cujus tante est in doctrina christiana auctoritas, ut nullus unquam ejus dictis calumniam inferre praesumpserit, sicut nec Athanasii documentis, ut Hieronymus dicit."

created prior to all of corporeal creation — which Aquinas considers to be within the boundaries of correct teaching, since he finds the thought that these great theologians could have strayed from true church doctrine to be abhorrent. The sticking point, for Aquinas, seems to be whether or not the six days of creation are to be understood literally (following Jerome et al.) or figuratively (following Augustine). Augustine's scheme — that the angels were created in the same moment as everything else — makes sense from a figurative standpoint. The contrary assertion is likewise probable, if one assumes that the act of creation took place through time. Thus, either idea can be held without being contrary to the truth.[175]

And as to the number of angels in existence, he writes — leaning on Pseudo-Dionysius — that the multitude of the angels far exceeds that of material beings, given that the perfection of the universe entails a greater number of the more-perfect beings.[176]

I.2.8. Gabriel Biel

Lastly, we come to Gabriel Biel: a fitting choice to follow Aquinas, since Biel tended to take Aquinas's teachings as his starting point when speaking about the angels. As Farthing points out, Biel's main support for teaching that the angels are by nature

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[175] Aquinas, *Treatise on Separated Substances*, 141: "Neutrum autem horum aestimo esse sanae dotrinae contrarium, quia nimis praesumptuosum videtur asserere tantos Ecclesiae doctores a sana doctrina pietatis deviasse. Sententia tamen Augustini magis videtur competere suae positioni qua ponit in rerum productione non fuisse temporis ordinem secundum dierum senarium quem Scriptura commemorat, sed illos sex dies referet ad intelligentiam angelicam sex rerum generibus praesentatam. Sententia vero Gregorii Nazianzeni, Hieronymi, et Damasceni convenientior est secundum eorum positionem qui ponunt in rerum productione successionem temporis secundum sex dies praedictos. Si enim creaturae non fuerunt omnes simul productae, satis probabile est creaturas spirituales omnia corpora praecessisse."

[176] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 35; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.50.3, 9.18: "… in quadam multitudine maxima sunt, omnem materialem multitudinem excedentes. Et hoc est quod dicit Dionysius, *Multi sunt beati exercitus supernarum mentium, infirmam et constrictam excedentes nostrorum materialum numerorum commensurationem.* Et hujus ratio est, qiua cum perfectio universi sit illud quod praecipue Deus intendit in creatione rerum, quanto aliqua sunt magis perfecta tanto in majori excessu sunt creata a Deo. … Unde rationablie est quod substantiae immateriales excedant secundum multitudinem substantias materiales quasi incomparabiliter."

beings of pure spirit come from reading Aquinas's critique of Origen. And like Aquinas, Biel asserts that despite their incorporeality, the angels can still choose to assume physical human form. His explanation for this ability, while not naming Aquinas explicitly, nevertheless recalls the Angelic Doctor's arguments.[177]

Biel also reveals his debt to Aquinas when writing about the angels' cognition. Like Thomas, he asserts that an angel has no need of any sensory apprehension or apparatus — its comprehension takes place purely in the realm of the intellect. However, Biel does stray away from Aquinas when he goes on to say that this holds true even when an angel has assumed a physical body, that acts of understanding that *seem* dependent on that body are nevertheless still independent intellectual events. While Biel himself realizes that this conclusion is not in total alignment with those of Aquinas, he maintains that it follows in the same vein.[178]

One of the rare positions on which Biel disagrees with Aquinas is whether each angel exists as its own species. Asked to choose between Bonaventure and Aquinas by a "willful questioner," Biel reluctantly concludes that Aquinas's position is unconvincing.[179] And as to when the angels were created, like Bonaventure, Biel maintains that they were created at the same time as the empyrean heaven, in which they continue to reside.[180]

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[177] Farthing, *Aquinas and Biel*, 27.
[178] Ibid, 28.
[179] Ibid, 27.
[180] Gabriel Biel, *Collectorium Circa Quattor Libros Sententiarum*, edited by Wilfridus Werbeck and Udo Hofmann, 4 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 2.85: "In caelo empyreo et cum illo omnes angeli simul sunt creati; in quo ceteris manentibus…"

I.3. What is their Role in Creation?

We also find each of our authors presenting their answers to our second angelological question: "What is the role of the angels in Creation?" And as before, each man demonstrates his own theological priorities and interests.

I.3.1. Augustine

As far as discussing the role of the angels in creation, Augustine says little that is not unmingled with other concerns. One place where he does speak on the topic is in *De Civitate Dei* 12.24. There, he writes that in no way is one to believe that angels were responsible for creating humans and animals and other beings; those beings were created by God alone. But the angels are nonetheless involved with creation in the same way that gardeners are involved with orchards: neither can be called the creators of that which they tend, but they do participate in the 'production' of objects, and the angels in particular are "permitted and commissioned" to do so.[181] In other words, "the angels work, but God grants the increase."[182] For example, assuming that the angels were present at Eve's creation, they certainly did not 'create' her. But, says Augustine, they may have participated in her creation by putting Adam to sleep and removing the rib from his body while he slept.[183] Nevertheless, God governs creation in such a way that creatures are free to move and act in ways that are congruent with their natures. Furthermore, God chooses to act through the angels quite often. Still, there are actions which God performs solely

[181] Keck, *Angels and Angelology,* 21; *City of God* XII.24, NPNF I.2.242; *De Civitate Dei,* 2.381: "Neque enim fas est ullius naturae quamlibet minimae mortalisque creatorem nisi Deum credere ac dicere, et antequam possit intellegi. Angeli autem, quos illi deos libentius appellant, etiamsi adhibent uel iussi uel permissi operationem suam rebus qaue gignuntur in mundo, tam non eos dicimus creatores animalium, quam nec agricolas frugum atque arborum."
[182] Van Fleteren, "Angels," 21.
[183] Pelz, "Augustinus," 41.

through Godself. In addition to the act of creation, Augustine also names beautification, writing that God beatifies the angels out of Godself. He goes on to make the explicit distinction that while God sends the angels often to humanity, the beautification that humanity experiences comes not through the goodness of the angels, but from God alone — the same way the angels receive it.[184] However, Augustine does believe that as an eternal being, God does not act within time in the same way that God's creatures do. The angels, therefore — as beings within time who retain their knowledge of God's plan — act as intermediaries and as administrators of those creatures who are incapable of knowing God directly. This is their primary function.[185]

The work of the angels Augustine divides into two types: the physical and the intellectual. He believes that the scope of the angelic work and the extent of their power is far beyond not only that of the entire human race, but also the power of the evil spirits as well. As to how, exactly, they interact with Creation, he is once again noncommittal — which should come as no surprise, given his tentativeness regarding the angels' physical form. Thus, he writes that the angels either give themselves the appearance of a body, or actually assemble that body.[186] The intellectual activity of the angels is such that they not only bring visions directly to human minds, but also enable humanity to receive them.[187]

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[184] *City of God* VII.30, NPNF I.2.140; *De Civitate Dei,* 1.212: "Sic itaque administrat omnia, quae creauit, ut etiam ipsa proprios exserere et agere motus sinat. Quamuis enim nihil esse possint sine ipso, non sunt quod ipse. Agit autem multa etiam per angelos; sed non nisi ex se ipso beatificat angelos. Ita quamuis propter aliquas causas hominibus angelos mittat, non tamen ex angelis homines, sed ex se ipso, sicut angelos, beatificat. Ab hoc uno et uero Deo uitam speramus aeternam."
[185] Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 221-2.
[186] Pelz, "Augustinus," 44.
[187] Ibid., 45.

I.3.2. Chrysostom

Chrysostom likewise sees the angels as tasked with the overall administration of the world, as can be seen from their central role in such events as the ending of armed conflict and the final plague against the Egyptians in Exodus, when God ordered their first-born sons to be killed.[188] Chrysostom writes in his 43rd homily on Acts that the angels are instruments of God's punishment, as God does not choose to punish directly. In this, he may be echoing Philo, who argued that it would be unfitting for God to punish at all, and that God therefore sends agents to do so in God's stead.[189] Yet Chrysostom does not seem sure whether the angels who punish are God's angels or the devil's. In his *Homily 2* on II Corinthians 1, he is explaining the difference between an angel of peace and, "an angel that punisheth, as when He saith, 'A band of evil angels,' there is that destroyeth."[190] Yet the angels are not only God's enforcers, but also humanity's protectors and guardians. In particular, they guard the faithful[191], but not only the faithful — every person has an angel to watch over them.[192] They act as ministers and rescuers to the faithful, as with Peter in Acts 12.[193]

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[188] Lai, "Hermeneutics," 60.
[189] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, 69. Cf. Chrysostom, *Homily XLVII* (Matthew 13:34,35): "But mark His unspeakable love to man, and His leaning to bounty, and His disinclination to punishment; in what, when He sows, He sows in His own person, but when He punishes, it is by others, that is, by the angels." NPNF I.10.286.
[190] Chrysostom, *Homily II* (II Corinthians 1:6,7), NPNF I.12.285.
[191] Lai, "Hermeneutics," 60.
[192] Chrysostom, *Homily XXVI* (Acts 12:1,2), NPNF I.11.171: "This is a truth, that each man has an angel." Also, "If then we have Angels, let us be sober, as though we were in the presence of tutors; for there is a demon present also." *Homily III* (Colossians 1:15-8), NPNF I.13.273.
[193] Chrysostom, *Homily XXVI* (Acts 12:1,2), NPNF I.11.171-2: "'Now know I that the Lord hath sent His Angel.' Why is not this effected by themselves? (I answer,) By this also the Lord honors them, that by the ministry of His Angels he rescues them. Then why was it not so in the case of Paul? There with good reason, because the jailer was to be converted, whereas here, it was only that the Apostle should be released. And God disposes all things in divers ways."

Chrysostom also sees the role of angels in creation to be tightly connected to the life and existence of humanity and of the world, saying that their specific office is to petition God for humanity's salvation.[194] In the same way, when we work for another person's salvation, we do an angelic work, as fellow-servants with the angels:

> And yet the space between men and angels is great; nevertheless he brings them down to us, all but saying, For us they labor, for our sake they run to and fro: on us, as one might say, they wait. This is their ministry, for our sake to be sent every way.[195]

Angels also act as messengers to those who have not yet attained deeper spiritual life. To the spiritual, argues Chrysostom, the Holy Spirit appears — but the angels bring visions and messages from God to the rest[196], especially in "former times."[197] God accomplished many things through the ministry of the angels, but humanity still was in danger of eternal death. Thus, "in the fullness of time," Christ appeared, diminishing the angels' role as minsters.[198] "For many had come to 'save' both Prophets and Angels; but this, saith one, is the True Saviour, who affordeth the true salvation, not what which is but for a time."[199] And when the angel appears to Cornelius in Acts 10, it first "rouses

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[194] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, 69.
[195] Chrysostom, *Homily III* (Hebrews 1:6-8), NPNF I.14.377.
[196] Chrysostom, *Homily XIX* (Acts 8:26,7), NPNF I.11.121-2: "Observe also at what time: in the most violent heat (of the day). "And the Spirit said unto him." (v. 29.) Not now the Angel but the Spirit urges him. Why is this? "Then," the vision took place, in grosser form, through the Angel, for this is for them that are more of the body, but the Spirit is for the more spiritual."
[197] Chrysostom, *Homily III* (Colossians 1:15-8), NPNF I.13.270-1: "For that they may not think Him to be of more recent existence, because that in former times the approach was through Angels, but now through Him; he shows first, that they had no power (for else it had not been 'out of darkness' that he brought), next, that He is also before them. And he uses as a proof of His being before them, this; that they were created by him. 'For in Him,' he saith, 'were all things created.'"
[198] Chrysostom, *Homily I* (Ephesians 1:1-2), NPNF I.13.54: "The fullness of the times, however, was His coming. After, then, He had done everything, by the ministry both of Angels, and of Prophets, and of the Law, and nothing came of it, and it was well nigh come to this, that man had been made in vain, brought into the world in vain, nay, rather to his ruin; when all were absolutely perishing, more fearfully than in the deluge, He devised this dispensation, that is by grace; that it might not be in vain, might not be to no purpose that man was created. This he calls 'the fulness of the times,' and 'wisdom.' And why so? Because at that time when they were on the very point of perishing, then they were rescued."
[199] Chrysostom, *Homily XXXV* (John 4:40-43), NPNF I.14.122.

and elevates his mind."[200] Angels also support preaching indirectly, through calling people to preach, rather than by preaching themselves.[201]

I.3.3. Pseudo-Dionysius

What then, according to Pseudo-Dionysius, are the roles of the different ranks of angels in creation?

As mentioned before, the angels of the highest ranks are blessed with immediate contact with God, receiving illumination and perfection directly from the Godhead. Each of the names of the angels of the first rank reflect the ways in which they express a similarity to God.[202] The seraphim continually circle around God, enflamed by their own movement, so that they may illuminate and purify all who are lower than themselves.[203] The cherubim, as the "outpouring of wisdom," receive the greatest part of God's light and continually contemplate it in their wisdom, a wisdom that they share with all who come after them.[204] The thrones suffer no possible deficiency and remain at all times in God's

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[200] Chrysostom, *Homily XXII* (Acts 10:1-4), NPNF I.11.142.
[201] Chrysostom, *Homily XIX* (Acts 8:26,27), NPNF I.11.121: "'And the Angel of the Lord,' etc. (Recapitulation, v. 26.) See Angels assisting the preaching, and not themselves preaching, but calling these (to the work). But the wonderful nature of the occurrence is shown also by this: that what of old was rare, and hardly done, here takes place with ease, and see with what frequency!"
[202] Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Celestial Hierarchy," 161-2: "This first of the hierarchies is hierarchically ordered by truly superior beings, for this hierarchy possesses the highest order as God's immediate neighbor, being grounded directly around God and receiving the primal theophanies and perfections. Hence the descriptions 'carriers of warmth' and 'thrones.' Hence, also, the title 'outpouring of wisdom.' These names indicate their similarity to what God is."
[203] Ibid., 162: "For the designation seraphim really teaches this — a perennial circling around the divine things, penetrating warmth, the overflowing heat of a movement which never falters and never fails, a capacity to stamp their own image on subordinates by arousing and uplifting in them too a like flame, the same warmth. It means also the power to purify by means of lightning flash and the flame. It means the ability to hold unveiled and undiminished both the light that they have and the illumination they give out. It means the capacity to push aside and to do away with every obscuring shadow."
[204] Ibid.: "The name cherubim signifies the power to know and to see God, to receive the greatest gifts of his light, to contemplate the divine splendor in primordial power, to be filled with the gifts that bring wisdom and to share in these generously with subordinates as a part of the beneficent outpouring of wisdom."

presence, completely open to God.[205] As a unit, these three types of angels are the closest possible beings to God, and thus, are totally pure and absolutely contemplative: pure, because they transcend all inferiority of being,[206] and contemplative, because they are consumed by the light that comes through direct contemplation of the divine.[207] Their purpose, according to Pseudo-Dionysius, is to be the first source of God's light for all beings who come after them.[208]

The second rank, comprised of the dominions, powers, and authorities, reveal to humanity ways in which God should be imitated. So the dominions reflect God's true governance of creation, to which they point and towards which they draw the lower orders.[209] The powers embody the true power and courage of God, passing on the courage to not be fearful of God's revelations as well as the power and strength to act upon them,

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[205] Ibid.: "The title of the most sublime and exalted thrones conveys that in them there is a transcendence over every earthly defect, as shown by their upward-bearing toward the ultimate heights, that they are forever separated from what is inferior, that they are completely intent upon remaining always and forever in the presence of him who is truly the most high, that, free of all passion and material concern, they are utterly available to receive the divine visitation, that they bear God and are every open, like servants, to welcome God."

[206] Ibid., 163: "One has to think of them as utterly 'pure,' not because they are free of all profane blemishes and of all tarnish or because they are innocent of earthly imaginings, but because they utterly transcend all weakness and all the lesser grades of the sacred."

[207] Ibid.: "They are 'contemplative' too, not because they contemplate symbols of the senses or the mind, or because they are uplifted to God by way of a composite contemplation of sacred writing, but, rather, because they are full of a superior light beyond any knowledge and because they are filled with a transcendent and triply luminous contemplation of the one who is the cause and the source of all beauty."

[208] Ibid., 166: "… when the first rank has directly and properly received its due understanding of God's Word from the divine goodness itself, then it passes this on, as benefits a benevolent hierarchy, to those next in line."

[209] Ibid., 167: "The revealing name 'dominions' signifies, in my view, a lifting up which is free, unfettered by earthly tendencies and uninclined toward any of those tyrannical dissimilarities which characterize a harsh dominion. Because it does not give way to any defect, it is above any abject creation of slaves, and, innocent of any dissimilarity, it is forever striving mightily toward the true dominion and the true source of all dominion. Benevolently and in accordance with capacity, it receives — as does it subordinates — the semblance of that domination. It rejects empty appearances, returns completely to the true Lord, and shares as far as it can in that everlasting and divine source of al dominion."

so that the lower orders may be divinized.[210] The authorities embody and reveal the order of creation to all levels of hierarchy, lifting up the lower ranks.[211]

The third rank of angels — principalities, archangels, and angels — is the one closest to creation and to humanity, and its powers and responsibilities are grounded around this fact. So the principalities literally act as princes, exercising their powers to lead people to the King, God, and to impose further order.[212] The archangels actually occupy a middle ground between their fellows of the third rank, being a "mean between extremes." Their task is to form and support the unity of all angelic beings, receiving the power to do so by way of the principalities. And to the angels, the archangels interpret and pass on all of the divine illumination that has been filtered down through the other orders.[213] Lastly, the angels are the ones who are closest to humanity, the final and most

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[210] Ibid.: "As for the holy 'powers,' the title refers to a kind of masculine and unshakable courage in all its godlike activities. It is a courage which abandons all laziness and softness during the reception of the divine enlightenments granted to it, and is powerfully uplifted to imitate God. Far from abandoning its godlike movement out of cowardice, it looks undeviatingly to that transcendent power which is the source of all power. Indeed this courage becomes, so far as possible, the very image of that power to which it shapes itself, being powerfully returned to it because it is the source of all power And at the same time, it transmits to its own inferiors its dynamic and divinizing power."

[211] Ibid.: "The holy 'authorities,' as their name indicates, have an equal order with the divine dominions and powers. They are so placed that they can receive God in a harmonious and unconfused way and indicate the ordered nature of the celestial and intellectual authority. Far from employing their authoritative powers to do tyrannous harm to the inferiors, they are harmoniously and unfailingly uplifted toward the things of God and, in their goodness, they lift up with them the ranks of those inferior to them. They are likened, insofar as they can be, to that authority which is the source of all authority and creates all authority; and they make that authority evident, to the extent that angels can, in their harmonious orders of authoritative power."

[212] Ibid., 170: "The term 'heavenly principalities' refers to those who possess a godlike and princely hegemony, with a sacred order most suited to princely power, the ability to be returned completely toward that principle which is above all principles and to lead others to him like a prince, the power to receive to the full the mark of the Principle of principles and, by their harmonious exercise of princely powers, to make manifest this transcendent principle of all order."

[213] Ibid.: "The holy archangels have the same order as the heavenly principalities and, as I have already indicated, they join with the angels to form a single hierarchy and rank. Still, every hierarchy has first, middle, and last powers, and the holy order of the archangels has something of both the others by virtue of being a mean between extremes. It communes with the most holy principalities and with the holy angels. Its relationship with the former derives from the fact that like a principality it is returned to its transcendent principle [source], that it receives upon itself as far as possible the mark of this principle, and that it brings about the unity of the angels, thanks to those invisible powers of ordering and arranging which it has received from that principle. Its relationship with the angels is due to their shared order as interpreters of those divine enlightenments mediated by the first powers."

direct source of revelation and illumination for us. They also most directly oversee human hierarchies, preparing them for transition upwards to God.[214]

Although he presents his reader with all of these levels and filtering, does Pseudo-Dionysius believe that God has completely turned over the governance of creation to the angels? Absolutely not, he writes. Speaking of Israel in particular, he states that God continues to rule over all nations, but has instructed the angels to bring all of humanity to salvation.[215] While one could argue that Israel is special because of its ties to Michael, Pseudo-Dionysius maintains that this relationship serves as an example to indicate that all nations have an angel devoted to helping that nation to realize the truth of God's governance and to acknowledge it:

> For there is only one Providence over all the world, a supra-being transcending all power visible and invisible; and over every nation there are presiding angels entrusted with the task of raising up toward that Providence, as their own source, everyone willing to follow, as far as possible.[216]

Thus, the ultimate task of the angels is to raise all of creation towards God:

> Then by this [first] rank [of angels] the second one, and by the second the third, and by the third our hierarchy is hierarchically uplifted, in due

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[214] Ibid., 170-1: "As I have already said, the angels complete the entire ranking of the heavenly intelligences. Among the heavenly beings it is they who possess the final quality of being an angel. For being closer to us, they, more appropriately than the previous ones, are named 'angels' insofar as their hierarchy is more concerned with revelation and is closer to the world. … The revealing rank of principalities, archangels, and angels presides among themselves over the human hierarchies, in order that the uplifting and return toward God, and the communion and union, might occur according to proper order, and indeed so that the procession might be benignly give by God to all hierarchies and might arrive at each one in a shared way in sacred harmony. So, then, it is the angels who take care of our own hierarchy, or so the Word of God tells us."

[215] Ibid., 172: "For there is only one ruling source and Providence in the world, and we must not imagine that the Deity took charge of the Jewish people alone and that angels or gods, on an equal footing with him or even hostile to him, had charge of the other peoples. The passage which might suggest this notion [Deuteronomy 32:8: " When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods…"] must be understood in this sacred sense, for it could not mean that God shared the government of mankind with other gods or angels or that he reigned in Israel as a local prince or chieftain. The single Providence of the Most High for all commanded angels to bring all peoples to salvation, but it was Israel alone which returned to the Light and proclaimed the true Lord."

[216] Ibid., 172-3.

> proportion and divine concord and according to this regulation of the harmonious source of order, toward that source beyond every source and consummation of all harmony.[217]

The angels' success in this endeavor, however, does not bring them joy — at least, not the same joy that humanity experiences. The joy described in scripture, says Pseudo-Dionysius, is actually a participation in the joy that God experiences when the lost are saved. The angels share that joy and well-being, becoming "unspeakably happy" at God's generosity.[218]

I.3.4. Bernard of Clairvaux

Like Chrysostom, Bernard of Clairvaux saw the angels as agents of both protection and destruction.[219] But he was also concerned with angels as agents of illumination — though this is not to say that he followed Pseudo-Dionysius in such matters. Take his exegesis of the Song of Songs 1:10, which reads, "We will make you golden earrings, inlaid with silver." (Vulgate)[220] According to Bernard, the angels are the 'we' and the earrings are the spiritual sensations and images that the angels bring to someone when he or she receives a vision from God. The angels also provide the appropriate words that one needs to fully describe the experience for others. Ultimately, these visions serve as preparation for the soul's eventual union with God. What is unique about Bernard's treatment of the idea of illumination of the soul is that he firmly links such illumination to

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[217] Ibid., 173.
[218] Ibid., 190: "Finally, I must explain something about what scripture intends in the reference to the joy of the heavenly ranks. Now these ranks could never experience the pleasures we draw from the passions. The reference therefore is to the way they participate in the divine joy caused by the finding of the lost. They undergo a truly divine sense of well-being, the good and generous delight at the providence and salvation of those who are returned to God. They are unspeakably happy in the way that, occasionally, sacred men ar happy when God arranges for divine enlightenments to visit them."
[219] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 39.
[220] Song of Songs 1:11: "We will make you ornaments of gold, studded with silver." (NRSV)

union with God — and he does so through exegesis alone.[221] The role of the angels in creation, for Bernard, is therefore to bridge the divide between humanity and God that the Fall created; ultimately, the same Christ was given to humanity as He was to the angels.[222] As ministering spirits, the angels jealously guard the spiritual members of the church, protecting them for presentation to Christ.[223] The angels also attend those who spend time in prayer.[224] Bernard says that it is through them that humanity's requests are brought to God.[225] Furthermore, these angelic visitations, claimed Bernard, are given only to the most holy and dedicated Christians. St. Victor, who heard the singing of the angels, was an example of this, he says.[226]

I.3.5. Peter Lombard

We now turn to Peter Lombard, who — relying on Pseudo-Dionysius — divided the angels into the same exact hierarchical structure.[227] Each of the orders, he writes, is

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[221] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 198. He goes on to say that, "Bernard's conception of the Bride as already a union of angels and humans allows the abbot to ascribe a role for the Bridegroom's companions which other exegetes of the Song of Songs did not explore."

[222] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 15," in *On the Song of Songs*, trans. Kilian Walsh and Irene Edmonds, 4 vols. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1971-80), 1.108; *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* in *Sämtliche Werke: lateinisch/deutsch*, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard B. Winkler (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1990), 5.214: "Nescio an vel ipse Moyses caperet sic, si non videlicet effunderetur. Sed fusum est, et captum est; nec modo fusum, sed et effusum, nam infusum iam erat. Iam caeli habebant illud, iam angelis innotuerat. Est autem foris missum, et quod angelis ita erat infusum, ut esset et privatum, effusum et in homines est, ita ut iam tunc merito clamaretur de terra: 'Oleum effusum nomen tuum'…"

[223] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 39," *Song of Songs* 2.194; *Cantica Canticorum* 6.54: "… noveris huiuscemodi animam numquam esse sine angelorum custodia, qui eam aemulantur Dei aemulatione, solliciti suo viro servare, et virginem castam exhibere Christo."

[224] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 7," *Song of Songs* 1.43; *Cantica Canticorum* 5.118: "Animae igitur in his exercitatae caelestes sese nuntii familiares exhibent et frequentes, praesertim si frequenter orantem persenserint. Quis dabit mihi per vos, o benigni princepes, petitiones meas innotescere apud Deum? Non enim Deo, cui etiam cogitatio hominis confitetur, sed apud Deum, hoc est, ipsis qui cum Deo sunt, tam beatis Virtutibus quam carne solutis spiritibus."

[225] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 86," *Song of Songs* 4.214; *Cantica Canticorum* 6.652: "Quam secreta de nocte ascendit oratio, solo arbitro Deo santoque angelo qui illam superno altari suscipit praesentandam!"

[226] Keck, *Angels and Angelology,* 193.

[227] II.9.1; Lombard, *Sententiae,* 1.371: "Unde Dionysius tres ordines angelorum esse tradit …"

formed by angels who share in similar gifts of both grace and nature.[228] But as to what each of the orders do, he relies on Gregory. Thus, the Seraphim 'enflame,' the Cherubim are the 'fullness of knowledge,' and the Thrones are so filled with grace that God considers and exercises judgments through them. The Dominations oversee the Principalities, who administer God's order and its fulfillment, and the Powers, who most strongly defend and support humanity against the predation of the demonic powers. Lastly, the Virtues work signs and miracles, the Archangels announce 'greater' things, and the Angels announce 'lesser' ones.[229] The names of these orders come from the various graces in which each member participates, some of which are superior to others. But Lombard also stresses that such names are not given to them for their sake, but for humanity's.[230] Even so, the graces that defined the separate orders came after the Fall, as part of the confirmation of the good angels.[231]

Regardless of within which order an angel resides, all angels potentially can be sent by God. The lower orders — particularly the angels and the archangels — are sent more

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[228] Ibid.: "Hic considerandum est quid appelletur ordo; deinde utrum ab ipsa creatione fureit distincto illorum ordinum. Ordo angelorum dicitur multitudo caelestium spirituum, qui inter se in aliquo munere gratiae similantur, sicut et in naturalium datorum munere conveniunt."

[229] Ibid.: "'Seraphim, ut beatus Gregorius ait, dicuntur qui prae aliis ardent caritate; Seraphim enim interpretatur ardens vel succendens. Cherubim, qui prae aliis in scientia eminent; Cherubim enim interpretatur plenitudo scientiae. Thronus dicitur sedes; Throni autem vocantur qui tanta divinitatis gratia replentur, ut in eis sedeat Deus et per eos iudicia decernat atque informet. Dominationes vocantur qui Principatus et Potestates transcendunt. Principatus dicuntur qui sibi subiectis quae sunt agenda disponunt eisque ad explenda divina mysteria principantur. Potestates nominantur hi qui hoc ceteris potentius in suo ordine acceperunt, ut virtutes adversae eis subiectae eorum refrenentur potestate, ne homines tantum tentare valeant, quantum desiderant. Virtutes vocantur illi, per quos signa et miracula frequenter fiunt; Archangeli, qui maiora nuntiant; Angeli, qui minora'."

[230] II.9.3; Ibid., 1.372: "Haec nomina illis non propter se, sed propter nos data sunt. Qui enim sibi noti sunt contemplatione nobis innotescunt cognominatione. Et nominantur singuli ordines a donis gratiarum, quae non singulariter, sed excellenter data sunt in participatione. In illa enim caelesti patria, ubi plenitudo boni est, licet quaedam data sint excellenter, nihil tamen possidetur singulariter. Omnia enim in omnibus sunt, non quidem aequaliter, quia alii aliis sublimius possident, quae tamen omnes habent. Cumque omnia dona gratiarum superiores ordines sublimius et perfectius perceperint, tamen ex praecipuis sortiti sunt vocabula, inferioribus cetera relinquentes ordinibus ad cognominationem …"

[231] II.9.4; Ibid., 1.374: "Ad quod dicimus, quia ante casum quorundam non erant isti ordines, quia nondum habebant dona, in quorum participationibus conveniunt; sed quibusdam cadentibus, aliis apposita sunt, eisque qui ceciderunt collata fuissent eadem dona, si perstitissent."

often than the greater orders. These superior orders then take on the name 'angel' when performing such tasks. Lombard bases this conclusion off of his reading of Psalm 103:4, which he interprets as meaning that these beings are spirits according to their natures, who then become 'angels' or messengers.[232]

I.3.6. Bonaventure

Like Augustine (and Lombard, incidentally), Bonaventure did not believe the angels had the capacity themselves to actually create. Like a potter who 'creates' a pot from preexisting materials, angels and demons can create objects — but in neither case is this creation *ex nihilo*.

As far as the angels' role in creation, Bonaventure was concerned with the martial aspects of their ministry only to a point, instead choosing to focus on their governance of the temporal aspects of creation.[233] Nevertheless, similarly to Bernard, Bonaventure links angelic visitation and comforting to the holiness of the person and the extent of their afflictions. Citing a story about St. Francis, who at the time was ill and craved soothing music, he writes that the angels themselves came to play at Francis' bedside, due to his great holiness and purity.[234] Even so, Bonaventure believed that the whole multitude of angels constantly minister to each human person. Reading and exegeting Genesis 32:1-2,

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[232] II.10.1; Ibid., 1.378: "Ad quod quidam dicunt, omnes quidem mitti, sed alios saepius et quasi ex officio iniuncto, qui proprie Angeli, vel Archangeli nominantur; alios vero rarius mitti, scilicet maiores, cum Angelorum ministerium sucipiunt, etiam nomen assumunt. Unde in Psalmo: Qui facit Angelos suos spiritus, quia illi qui natura spiritus sunt, aliquando angeli, id est nuntii fiunt."
[233] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 203.
[234] Ibid., 193; Bonaventure, "Legenda Maior sancti Francisci", in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 8.519: "Cum enim tempore quodam, ex multarum infirmitatum concursu aggravato corpore, ad iucunditatem spiritus excitandam alicuius audiendi soni harmonici desiderium habuisset, nec id honestatis decentia per ministerium fieri pateretur humanum; affuit Angelorum obsequium ad viri sancti placitum adimplendum. Nocte etenim quadam vigilante ipso et meditante de Domino, repente insonuit cithara quaedam harmoniae mirabilis et suavissimae melodiae. Non videbatur aliquis, sed transitum et reditum citharoedi ipsa hinc inde auditus volubilitas innuebat. Spiritu in Deum directo, tanta fuit in illo dulcisono carmine suavitate perfruitus, ut aliud se putaret saeculum commutasse."

where the angels greet Jacob, Bonaventure finds comfort in this event, "… [discovering] from this passage that the faithful should not be the fearful: 'For we have the Lord and the angels about us.'"[235]

Keck sees in the increase of new questions regarding guardian angels during in this time period, particularly in regards to what extent such beings participate in human salvation, free will, and natural merit, the product of a new understanding of the relationship between nature and grace as being more harmonious than previously believed.[236] Naturally, Bonaventure contributed to the discussion by offering his own replies to arguments against their existence. In no way does angelic assistance impede — or even affect — human free will.[237] Furthermore, guardian angels do not erode a person's merit through their assistance; the angels aid humanity, but the impact of human choice and the rewards received remain the same.[238] These formulations also preserve God's role in human salvation, since God participates in the angelic work.[239] Thus, the angels' work is a manifestation of God's 'cooperating grace' rather than 'operating

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[235] Ibid., 34; "Hexaëmeron," 5.412: "Item, illustrat *in gyro*, ut, non esse fugiendum, quia undique praesidium habemus. Habemus enim ipsum Dominum et Angelos circa nos ..."
[236] Keck, *Angels and Angelology,* 162.
[237] II.d11.a1.q1, "Liber II Sententiarum," 2.278: "… dicendum, quod etsi non possit fieri violentia, quantum est ex parte *liberi arbitrii*, posset tamen fieri, quantum est ex parte *sui corporis*. *Et iterum*, quamvis angelus non possit sufficienter liberum arbitrium violentare, tamen nisi haberet contrariam potestatem arcentem, adeo posset inducere et circumvenire, quod valde pauci essent, quos non deiiceret; et ideo pernecessaria est custodia angelica, quae comprimat potestatem diabolicam."
[238] Ibid. "… dicendum, quod verum esset, si ita bene triumpharet homo absque Angelo, sicut cum adiutorio angelico. Nunc autem non est ita. Si enim ei deesset angelicum subsidium, multo frequentius vinceretur, quam vinceret; et multo melius est cum angelico praesidio vincere, quam sine praesidio perdere. *Et iterum*, praesidium Angeli non excludit libertatem arbitrii nec minuit dignitatem gratiae Dei, et ideo nihil minuit de substantia meriti vel praemii vel de nobilitate triumphi, quantum ad id quod est substantiale."
[239] Ibid.: "… dicendum, quod perfectio divinae custodiae non excludit utilitatem anglicae. Sicut enim Deus operatur in omnibus rebus, et tamen eius operatio operationes creaturarum non excludit, sed conservat et adiuvat; nec tamen eius operatio est imperfecta, nec operatio creaturae superflua: sic intelligendum est de custodia. Sicut enim Deus propter suae bonitatis manifestationem et ordinis sapientiae ostensionem creaturis communicavit posse operari et in alias creaturas effectum suum imprimere, ipso tamen non deserente, sed cooperante; sic dedit Angelis posse hominem custodire, cum tamen a servorum suorum custodia ipse nunquam desistat, quia tale *posse* competebat angelicae naturae et gratiae. Et una istarum custodiarum alteri non praeiudicat, immo divina facit ad angelicae custodiae perfectionem, angelica vero ad perfectionis divinae custodiae manifestationem."

grace.' Likewise, while the guardian angels themselves cannot save a person, states Bonaventure, they participate in the believer's own works for three reasons: their love of God, their desire to see humanity saved, and their hope for the repair and reinforcement of the angelic hierarchies.[240]

Bonaventure also believed that a person's soul could suffer temptation even before actual birth, and thus, one becomes linked to one's guardian angel at the very moment of conception.[241] However, this angelic custodianship does not mean that person is guaranteed salvation. The question then often raised was whether or not a damned person's guardian angel would feel sorrow at the loss of its charge. Bonaventure's reply is that an angel's joy and contentment is so complete that it is incapable of feeling any despair at all, a joy due to the "substantial" reward of Heaven. Neither does the angel's "accidental" joy, a joy that comes from created beings, decrease due to its charge's damnation. However, the angel's charge's salvation can increase the angel's joy.[242]

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[240] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 162.

[241] Ibid., 160; II.d11.dubia, "Liber II Sententiarum," 2.289: "Dicendum, quod, sicut dicit Hieronymi auctoritas, intelligendum est, quod ad custodiam hominis Angelus deputatur ab ortu nativitatis; et non solum intelligit de nativitate *ex* utero, sed etiam de nativitate *in* utero. Ex tunc enim, non ante, debet angelica custodia circa eum qui nasciturus est, deputari, quia illa custodia principalius respicit spiritum quam corpus; et ideo non debet specialem Angelum ad sui custodiam habere, antequam spiritus infundatur. Non debet etiam differre, quia ex tunc defendere potest et adiuvare, magis tamen secundum tempora diversa. Dum enim est in utero parvulus, potest interimi et damnari; dum est extra uterum ante adultam aetatem, potest baptismate impediri; dum est in adulta aetate, ad diversa peccata potest pertrahi. Contra haec omnia in his tribus statibus debet sibi angelica custodia deputari, ut per eam ab his malis possit erui et ab adversario defendi. Et hi effectus satis sunt plani, qui sunt per liberationem a malo. — Utrum autem parvulus, quamdiu caret usu rationis, aliquem occultum effectum habeat quantum ad habilitationem et directionem in bonum, assignare est difficile, sed negare non est tutum."

[242] II.d11.a2.q2, Ibid., 2.286: "… quod ex nostra beatificatione Angelis accrescat gaudium, concludunt solum de gaudio *accidentali*, quod est circa bonum, in quo tamen non consistit *essentialis* praemii augmentatio.

Rationes vero ad oppositum procedunt sive concludunt de gaudio *substantiali*, ratione cuius est Angelus perfecte beatus, et quod respondet quantitati habitus, et quod est circa bonum increatum; et hoc quidem non crescit in eo, sicut illae rationes ostendunt. — Ultima tamen ratio non concludit, quod homo possit gaudium angelicum impedire; quia, sicut iam melius patebit, sic Angelus congratulatur de hominum salute, ut tamen non tristetur de damnatione; et ita nostrae salutis impedimentum nullum in angelico gaudio vel praemio ponit defectum. Nullum tamen inconveniens esse videtur, si concedatur, quod impediri possit ipsius Angeli aliquod *accidentale* gaudium; sed illud melius declarabitur per consequens problema." Cf. Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 107.

I.3.7. Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas, too, was concerned with the limitations of angel power, especially when responding to Arabic philosophical conceptions of the nature of separated substances, as well as common beliefs about magic. As he wrote, when the angels perform miracles, they do not do so through their own power, but according to God's.[243]

And like Pseudo-Dionysius (whom he relies on to a large extent in this regard), Aquinas wrote that the angels have been organized into a hierarchy of orders. Such a hierarchy is necessarily divided into separate orders, due to the simple fact that a hierarchy is composed of a multitude of objects; such a multitude would be merely chaos were it not organized and divided according to the actions of the objects and their offices.[244] But an order is also oriented towards a particular goal or set of goals that all of its objects share. In the case of the angels, says Thomas, that end is to know God through the "capabilities of their nature," and through grace, which enable them to see and know God in God's essence. Thus, the angels are organized according to the extent to which they enjoy both of these gifts, since they receive God's grace in proportion to their own nature.[245] The angels are likewise named according to the extent to which they possess these gifts. Echoing Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas explains that while all angels possess all

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[243] Keck, *Angels and* Angelology, 193.
[244] I.108.2; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 14.126: "Dicendum quod, sicut dictum est, una hierarchia est unus principatus, idest una multitudo ordinata uno modo sub principis gubernatione. Non autem esset multitudo ordinata sed confusa, si in multitudine diversi ordines non esset. Ipsa ergo ratio hierarchiae requirit ordinum diversitatem. Quae quidem diversitas ordinum secundum diversa officia et actus consideratur."
[245] I.108.4; Ibid., 14.132: "Dicendum quod ordo gubernationis, qui est ordo multitudinis sub principatu existentis, attenditur per respectum ad finem. Finis autem angelorum potest accipi dupliciter. Uno modo, secundum facultatem suae naturae, ut scilicet cognoscant et ament Deum naturali cognitione et amore. Et secundum respectum ad hunc finem distinguuntur ordines angelorum secundum naturalia dona. Alio modo potest accipi finis angelicae multitudinis supra naturalem facultatem eorum, qui consistit in visione divinae essentiae et in immobili fruitione bonitatis ipsius. Ad quem finem pertingere non possunt nisi per gratiam." Aquinas goes on to say that humanity, by contrast, shares equal gifts of nature, and is thus organized according to gifts of grace.

possible spiritual gifts, higher angels will possess them to a greater degree than do the lower angels. Each order is thus named according to its *superus perfectio.*[246] As to the rankings of these orders, Thomas considers the schemes of both Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory. He argues that both make sense, but his discussion of Pseudo-Dionysius' is much more involved. And yet, Aquinas asserts that there is no real difference between the two.[247] Finally, Aquinas argues that the angels rule over all corporeal beings, given that the angels — as spiritual beings — are superior to them all.[248]

I.3.8. Gabriel Biel

Again closely following those who had come before, Biel chose to rely heavily on Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory in formulating his own thought on the angels' place in creation, supplemented by responses to Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure. In his *Sentences* commentary, Biel begins his discussion of the angelic hierarchy by making three broad distinctions of levels, between the "*supercaelestis"* or divine, the *"caelestis"* or angelic, and the *"subcaelestis"* or human/ecclesiastical. The latter two levels, or the "created hierarchy," are orders of righteousness, knowledge, and activity, similar to each other in the way in which they depend upon God for their powers, as well as in the manner of their imitation of God.[249]

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[246] I.108.5; Ibid., 14.136: "Sic igitur considerandum est in ordinibus angelorum quod omnes spirituales perfectiones sunt omnibus angelis communes et omnes abundantius existunt in superioribus quam in inferioribus. Sed cum in ipsis etiam perfectionibus sit quidam gradus, superior perfectio attribuitur superiori ordini per proprietatem, inferiori vero per participationem; e converso autem inferior attribuitur inferiori per proprietatem, superiori autem per excessum. Et ita superior ordo a superiori perfectione nominatur."
[247] I.108.6; Ibid., 14.148: "Ad quartum dicendum quod si quis diligenter consideret dispositiones ordinum secundum Dionysium et Gregorium, parum vel nihil differunt si ad rem referantur."
[248] I.110.1; Ibid., 15.4: "Et ideo sicut inferiores angeli, qui habent formas minus universales, reguntur per superiores; ita omnia corporalia reguntur per angelos."
[249] Biel, *Sententiarum*, 2.243: "Et est triplex: supercaelestis, quae dicitur divina, caelestis, quae est angelica, et subcaelestis, quae est humana sive ecclesiastica. … Hierarchiam creatam, tam angelicam quam humanam sive ecclesiasticam, ita describit *Dionysius* ubi supra: Est 'ordo sacratior et scientia et operatio, quae ad Dei similitudinem pro viribus nititur, ac pro modo suo ad imitationem.'"

And again following Pseudo-Dionysius, Biel divides the angels into three tiers according to the strengths or properties that they have. The highest orders possess knowledge — they know God and converse with God, resting in God through contemplation and their own knowledge, love, and loyalty. The middle ranks possess an ordered power, which is ordained for the care of inferiors. Finally, the lowest ranks possess action, by which Biel means they act as ministers and administrators. Thus, he also names them as contemplatives, leaders, and actors.[250]

As to where within the hierarchy the individual angelic orders reside, Biel follows tradition, though he does note that Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory disagree on the members of the second tier — Pseudo-Dionysius places the Virtues there, but Gregory's (and Bernard's) ordering has the Principalities there instead.[251] Ultimately, Biel agrees with Pseudo-Dionysius's scheme.[252]

Furthermore, the distinctions between the different hierarchies and ranks of angels determine the nature of their mission to both humanity and to inferior angels. As Biel writes, the most powerful angels are sent to those of the middle ranks, the middle ranks to the lowest, and the lowest to the rest of physical creation. Yet these missions in no way keep the highest ranks from remaining in the presence of God and in contemplation.[253]

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[250] Ibid., 2.244: "Secundum scientiam divinam accipitur suprema. Est enim suprema eorum, qui conversi sunt ad Deum, eius soli contemplationi inhaerentes in ipsius cognitione, amore ac firma tentione conquiescunt. … Secundum ordinem, scilicet potentiae, id est potentiam ordinatam respectu inferiorum, attenditur media hierarchia. Et penes actionem ministerialem sive administrativam et exsecutivam simitur ultima. Vel clarius et aliter accipitur haec distinctio secundum tres status et officia, qui sunt status contemplativorum, praelatorum, et activorum."

[251] Ibid., 2.246: "In media hierarchia et infirma diversitas invenitur. Nam beatus *Dionysius* in medio ponit 'dominationes, principatus, et virtutes'; sed beatus *Gregorius* et *Bernardus* ponit 'dominationes, principatus, et potestates'."

[252] Ibid., 2.250: "Secunda patet per beatum *Dionysium* ubi supra."

[253] Ibid., 2.278: "Supremae hierarchiae spiritus tantum ad medios, medii ad infimos, ad exteriora infimi mittuntur. Nulli tamen eorum propter hoc a Dei praesentia et contemplatione beatifica excluduntur."

I.4. What is their Relationship with Humanity?

Our third question, "What is the nature of the angels' relationship with humanity?" also receives varied answers from each of our theologians. We begin with Augustine.

I.4.1. Augustine

We saw earlier that on the topic of angelic bodies, Augustine came down cautiously on the side of affirming angelic physicality. Nevertheless, according to him, the angelic body is superior to a human body, with senses that are more powerful than human ones. Furthermore, the angel possesses complete control over its body, and has no need for food or sexual activity.[254] Humanity, on the other hand, occupies a middle ground between angels and animals. Like an animal, a human is mortal. But like an angel, a human possesses reason.[255] God meant for humanity to be a creature between angel and animal in this way, and that humanity should gain immortality if they continued to acknowledge God as Lord and Creator, and kept God's commandments. Eventually — without undergoing death — humanity would enter the company of the angels. Had Adam and Eve not sinned, humanity would have continued to enjoy the blessings that were theirs in the Garden — no mental difficulties, no physical ones — until such time as God would have proclaimed that "the number of predestined saints should have been completed." Then humanity would have enjoyed the same happiness as the angels enjoy: "… a blessedness in which there should have been a secure assurance that no one would sin, and no one die…" But after the Fall, the only way the saints can experience this kind

[254] Pelz, "Augustinus," 17.
[255] *City of God* IX.13, NPNF I.2.173; *De Civitate Dei* 1.261: "… sicut homo medium quiddam est, sed inter pecora et angelos, ut, quia pecus est animal inrationale atque mortale, angelus autem rationale et inmortale, medius homo est, sed inferior angelis, superior pecoribus, habens cum pecoribus mortalitatem, rationem cum angelis, animal rationale mortale."

of life is after the resurrection.[256] Yet even prior to the giving of the Law, God's commandments, humanity would have been instructed in these ways, towards this goal, by the angels and by God Godself. After the Law had been given, humanity had the prophets as guides, but as Augustine points out, the prophets were very much like the angels in the way they proclaimed God's promises.[257]

According to Augustine, sometimes the line between humans and angels can be somewhat blurred, especially in terms of the work that each kind of being accomplishes. Although angels serve as the usual messengers of God, writes Augustine, humans also serve in that capacity to other humans, "so as not to denigrate human nature."[258] Humanity is called to become "in our measure," angels that proclaim God's will and praise God's grace and glory.[259] As Augustine further points out, Christ Himself, as well as the prophets, John the Baptist, and Paul are called 'angels' when they perform their

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[256] *City of God* XIV.10, NPNF I.2.271; *De Civitate Dei* 2.430-1: "Quam igitur felices erant et nullis agitabantur perturbationis animorum, nullis corporum laedebantur incommodis: tam felix uniuersa societas esset humana, si nec illi malum, quod etiam in posteros traicerent, nec quisquam ex eorum stirpe iniquitate committeret, quod damnatione reciperet; atque ista permanente felicitate, donec per illam benedictionem, qua dictum est: *Crescite et multiplicamini*, praedestinatorum sanctorum numerus compleretur, alia maior daretur, quae beatissimis angelis data est, ubi iam esset certa securitas peccaturum neminem neminemque moriturum, et talis esse uita sanctorum post nullum laboris doloris mortis experimentum, qualis erit post haec omnia in incorruptione corporum reddita resurrectione mortuorum."

[257] *City of God* X.25, NPNF I.2.195; *De Civitate Dei* 1.298: "Huius sacramenti fide etiam iusti antiqui mundari pie uiuendo potuerunt, non solum antequam lex populo Hebraeo daretur (neque enim eis pradicator Deus uel angeli defuerunt), sed ipsius quoque legis temporibus, quamuis in figuris rerum spiritualium habere uideretur promissa carnalia, propter quod uetus dicitur testamentum. Name et prophetae tunc erant, per quos, sicut per angelos, eadem promissio praedicata est …"

[258] Van Fleteren, "Angels," 21.

[259] *City of God* X.25, NPNF I.2.196; *De Civitate Dei* 1.300: "In hac autem spe nunc constituti agamus quod sequitur, et simus nos quoque pro modulo nostro angeli Dei, id est nuntii eius, adnuntiantes eius uolontatem et gloriam gratiamque laudantes. Vnde cum dixisset: *Ponere in Deo spem meam, ut adnuntiem,* inquit, *omnes laudes tuas in portis filiae Sion*. Haec est gloriosissima ciuitates Dei; haec unum Deum nouit et colit; hanc angeli sancti adnuntiauerunt, qui nos ad eius societatem inuitauerunt civesque suos in illia esse uoluerunt; quibus non placet ut eos colamus tamquam nostros deos, sed cum eis et illorum et nostrum Deum; nec eis sacrificemus, sed cum ipsis sacrificium simus Deo. Nullo itaque dubitante, qui haec deposita maligna obstinatione considerat, omnes inmortales beati, qui nobis non inuident (neque enim si inuiderent, essent beati), sed potius nos diligunt, ut et nos cum ipsis beati simus, plus nobis fauent, plus adiuuant, quando unum Deum cum illis colimus, Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum, quam si eos ipsos per sacrificia coleremus."

office as messengers of God.[260] And in any case, humanity — after the final resurrection — will have an existence that is often stated as being equal to the angels.[261] In fact, according to *De Civitate Dei*, God will replace the fallen angels with worthy human beings in such a way that not only will the full numbers of the heavenly city be replaced, but they might exceed the previous population.[262] Thus, the human citizens of the City of God are perfect, existing "in that immortal condition in which they equal the angels …"[263] As Augustine says:

> … those men who have been embraced by God's grace, and are become the fellow-citizens of the holy angels who have continued in bliss, shall never more either sin or die, being endued with spiritual bodies; yet, being clothed with immortality, such as the angels enjoy, of which they cannot be divested even by sinning, the nature of their flesh shall continue the same, but all carnal corruption and unwieldiness shall be removed.[264]

Now, what does Augustine mean by 'spiritual bodies?' After the resurrection, the godly will have no need of sustenance. They will not suffer from disease, old age, thirst or hunger. But they may still choose to eat — they do not lose the capacity to do so. Here, Augustine draws a comparison with the angels, who took on bodies when interacting with humanity. The angels had no need to do so because of anything within themselves, but

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[260] Van Fleteren, "Angels," 21.
[261] Ibid., 21.
[262] Bernard Lohse, "Zu Augustins Engellehre," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 70.4 (1959): 279. In his article, Lohse argues that this idea of replacement of the fallen angels by humanity, while having roots in prior exegeses and writings by the fathers, is an innovation of Augustine's. Cf. *City of God* XXII.1, NPNF I.2.480; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 2.807: "… (quem similiter cum praeuaricatione legis Dei per Dei desertionem peccaturum esse praesciret, nec illi ademit liberi arbitrii potestatem, simul praeuidens, quid boni de malo eius esset ipse facturus); qui de mortali progenie merito iusteque damnata tantum populum gratia sua colligit, ut inde suppleat et instauret partem, quae lapsa est angelorum, ac sic illa dilecta et superna ciuitas non fraudetur suorum numero ciuium, quin etiam fortassis et uberiore laetetur."
[263] *City of God* XV.26, NPNF I.2.306; *De Civitate Dei* 2.493: "… (non utique sicut perficiendi sunt ciues ciuitates Dei in illa inmortalitate, quia aequabuntur angelis Dei, sed sicut esse possunt in hac peregrinatione perfecti) …" Augustine here is arguing that while Noah was a 'perfect' man, he was only perfect insofar as a human being can be perfect while still on earth — which is not the degree of perfection attained by those who have passed on, and now equal the angels in perfection.
[264] *City of God* XIII.24, NPNF I.2.261; *De Civitate Dei* 2.413: "Sed homines ad Dei gratiam pertinentes, ciues sanctorum angelorum in beata uita manentium, ita spiritalibus corporis induentur, ut neque peccent amplius neque moriantur; ea tamen inmortalitate uestiti, quae, sicut angelorum, nec peccato possit auferri; natura quidem manente carnis, sed nulla omnio carnali corruptibilitate uel tarditate remanente."

did so because they wished to perform a "manhood ministry." Likewise, when they appeared to eat, they were really eating — but again by choice, not out of necessity. Even Christ Himself, after His return, when he possessed "spiritual but real flesh," truly ate and drank with His followers. Thus, "[these bodies] will be spiritual, not because they shall cease to be bodies, but because they shall subsist by the quickening spirit."[265]

I.4.2. Chrysostom

Chrysostom's perspective on the nature of human-angelic interaction was complex, and at times seemingly contradictory. According to certain texts, he seemed sure that the gap between angelic and earthly beings was too great to overcome, such as his *De incomprehensibili de natura*, the first homily of which made a strong case that the angels share nothing in common with humanity. He goes on to claim, in Homilies 2 and 3, that the entirety of physical creation is worthless when compared to a single angel, and that even Daniel himself — a great prophet — was unable to truly see one.[266]

Nevertheless, much of Chrysostom's thoughts on the relationship between the angels and humanity detail the ways in which holy and virtuous humans could become similar to the angels, even to the point of actually becoming or surpassing them. As it

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[265] *City of God* XIII.22, NPNF I.2.256-7; *De Civitate Dei* 2.405: "Corpora ergo iustorum, quae in resurrectione futura sunt, neque ullo ligno indigebunt, quo fiat ut nullo morbo uel senectute inueterata moriantur, neque ullis aliis corporalibus alimentis, quibus esuriendi ac sitiendi qualiscumque molestia deuitetur; quoniam certo et omni modo inuiolabili munere inmortalitatis indeuentur, ut non nisi uelint, possibilitate, non necessitate uescantur. Quod angeli quoque uisibiliter et tractabiliter adparentes, non quia indigebant, sed quia uolebant et poterant, ut hominibus congruerent sui ministerii quadam humanitate, fecerunt (neque enim in phantasmate angelos edisse credendum est, quando eos homines hospitio susceperunt), quamuis utrum angeli essent ignorantibus simili nobis indigentia uesci uiderentur. Vnde est quod ait angelos in libro Tobiae: *Videbatis me manducare, sed uisu uestro uidebatis;* id est necessitate reficiendi corporis, sicut uos facitis, me cibum sumere putabatis. Sed si forte de angelis aliud credibilius disputari potest, certe fides Chrisiana de ipso Saluatore non dubitat, quod etiam post resurrectionem, iam quidem in spiritali carne, sed tame uera, cibum ac potum cum discipulis sumpsit. Non enim potestas, sed egestas edendi ac bibendi talibus corporibus auferetur. Vnde et spiritalia erunt, non quia corpora esse desistent, sed quia spiritu uiuificante subsistent."

[266] Lai, "Hermeneutics," 60.

happens, at the beginning of Creation, humans and angels were almost the same. Chrysostom argues that prelapsarian humanity was positively angelic – not suffering desire or any of the other passions, not subject to the needs of the body (particularly for intercourse), and incorruptible and immortal,[267] enjoying a status, "not inferior to the angels."[268] In fact, Chrysostom writes that "… [God] intended man should pass his days on the earth like some terrestrial angel."[269] Despite the effects of the Fall, a Christian can still "live the life of the angels" while remaining in a physical body. Furthermore, despite this physicality, such people are by no means "inferior to those [heavenly beings] who inhabit the heaven."[270] Likewise, in his *Homilies on Acts*, Chrysostom argues that since virtue is what makes angels angels, a human being becoming positively angelic — as far as one's will, at least — is entirely possible.[271]

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[267] Chrysostom, "Homily 15," *Homilies on Genesis* I.203: "I mean, the consummation of that intercourse occurred after the Fall; up till that time they were living like angels in paradise and so they were not burning with desire, not assaulted by other passions, not subject to the needs of nature, but on the contrary were created incorruptible and immortal, and on that account at any rate they had no need to wear clothes. "They were both naked," the text says, remember, "and were not ashamed." You see, while sin and disobedience had not yet come on the scene, they were clad in that glory from above which caused them no shame; but after the breaking of the law, then entered the scene both shame and awareness of their nakedness. So, from what source, tell me, did these things come for him to utter? Surely it's obvious that before his disobedience he had a share in prophetic grace and saw everything through the eyes of the Spirit." See also Homily 46, where Chrysostom says, "the first-formed human being was created immortal…" (*Homilies on Genesis* III.12). This immortality appears to be present by default for Chrysostom, in that he writes in Homily 21 that it was "stripped" when God condemned Adam to death (*Homilies on Genesis* III.54).

[268] Chrysostom, "Homily 27," *Homilies on Genesis* II.162-3: "… [God] for his part intended from the beginning that human beings should enjoy life in the garden, have a life free from pain, be relieved of any distress, and while happening to be in bodily condition to enjoy a status not inferior to the angels and those incorporeal powers but even be proof against bodily needs?"

[269] Chrysostom, "Homily 15," *Homilies on Genesis* I.204: "On the contrary, as I said before, he intended man should pass his days on earth like some terrestrial angel."

[270] Lai, "Hermeneutics," 67-8; NPNF I.11.516: "Let us then be persuaded, and indulge ourselves in His love. For in this way we shall both see His Kingdom even from out of this life, and shall be living the life of Angels, and while we abide on earth, we shall be in as goodly a condition as they that dwell in heaven; and after our departing hence, shall stand the brightest of beings by the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall enjoy that glory unutterable, which may we all attain unto, by the grace and love toward man of our Lord Jesus Christ."

[271] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy,* 69; NPNF I.11.205: "In a word, it is virtue which makes angels: but this is in our power: therefore we are able to make angels, though not in nature, certainly in will."

But lest one equate 'attainment of virtue' with 'practicing asceticism' — as did so many of his contemporaries — Chrysostom carefully delineates the difference, such as when he spoke on chastity in his *Homilies on Matthew* (referring to Matthew 22:30),[272] saying "… not because they do not marry, therefore they are angels, but because they are as angels, therefore they do not marry."[273] It is not the action itself that denotes a person as angelic, nor is it the renouncing of everything earthly. As he says in his *Homily 9* on Hebrews, both "[living] like the angels" and "need[ing] not one of these earthly things" are not the same thing, but are both still necessary for an "introduction" into the world to come — which itself is marked by "eternal life and angelic conversation," which we may enjoy even now.[274] And yet, morality does play a part in the angelic life; however, it is not a determinate factor, but a basic principle thereof. Chrysostom argues in his *Homily 11* on Romans, that Christ frees humanity from evil and instills righteousness within, leading people to the "angelic life," while at the same time, blazing the trail into that life.[275] As Lai points out, Chrysostom's usage of the term "angelic life" as shorthand for the ideal Christian life serves to illustrate what he sees as five similarities between Christian and angel: "Like the angel, the Christian should not be given in marriage, not

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[272] "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." (NRSV) Keck points out that this passage was often used as evidence that humanity should be like the angels, particularly during discussions of soteriology, eschatology, or angelology. Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 44.

[273] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, 69; NPNF I.10.410.

[274] Lai, "Hermenteutics," 67; NPNF I.14.411: "'And tasted,' he says, 'the good word of God'; and he does not unfold it; 'and the powers of the world to come,' for to live as Angels and to have no need of earthly things, to know that this is the means of our introduction to the enjoyment of the worlds to come; this may we learn through the Spirit, and enter into those sacred recesses. What are 'the powers of the world to come'? Life eternal, angelic conversation. Of these we have already received the earnest through our Faith from the Spirit."

[275] Ibid., 67; NPNF I.11.412-13: "For God hath done the same as if a person were to take an orphan, who had been carried away by savages into their own country, and were not only to free him from captivity, but were to set a kind father over him, and bring him to very great dignity. And this has been done in our case. For it was not our old evils alone that He freed us from, since He even led us to the life of angels, and paved the way for us to the best conversation, handing us over to the safe keeping of righteousness, and killing our former evils, and deadening the old man, and leading us to an immortal life."

love material riches, should enjoy immortality, participate in the heavenly *politikos* and attain a morality reminiscent to the angels."[276]

In addition, as we have seen, Chrysostom believed it was only due to the work and influence of Jesus Christ on the Christian that he or she could attain the angelic life. To them, Christ brings *arête*, or more explicitly, "the way of life of the angels."[277] Following from this perspective, he understands Christ's work to function for humanity on two levels: on the soteriological level, Chrysostom believes that when a person is saved by Christ, he or she reverts back to the angelic life enjoyed by prelapsarian Adam and Eve.[278] And on an eschatological level, when a person is pulled into the angelic life by Christ, he or she becomes a sacred person, both priest and angel.[279] But the Christian's ascension does not necessarily stop there, argues Chrysostom. In fact, what he most consistently argues by comparing the Christian life to the angelic life is how far the Christian has exceeded the status of the angels, due to salvation through Christ. In his *Homily 5* on Colossians, his point is that Christ's coming has elevated humanity — whom he describes as "more senseless than stone" — not only to the same level as the angels but also that they have "become the body of the Master of the angels and

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[276] Lai, "Hermeneutics," 67.
[277] Ibid., 57-8; NPNF 1.13.166: "… the Son of the Very God, hath brought every virtue, hath brought down from Heaven all the fruits that are from thence, the songs of heaven hath He brought. For the words which the Cherubim above say, these hath He charged us to say also, "Holy, Holy, Holy." He hath brought to us the virtue of the Angels. "The Angels marry not, neither are given in marriage"
(Matt. xxii. 30.); this fair plant hath He planted here also. They love not money, nor anything like it; and this too hath He sown amongst us. They never die; and this hath He freely given us also, for death is no longer death, but sleep."
[278] Lai, "Hermeneutics," 57 (footnote 149).
[279] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, 204; Chrysostom, "Homily 30" on Hebrews, NPNF I.12.418: "'For if ye do these things,' [Paul] says, 'for instance, if ye be "of one mind" and "live in peace," God also will be with you, for He is "the God of love and of peace," and in these things He delighteth, He rejoiceth. Hence shall peace also be yours from His love; hence shall every evil be removed. This saved the world, this ended the long war, this blended together heaven and earth, this made men angels. This then let us also imitate, for love is the mother of countless good things. By this we were saved, by this all those unspeakable good things [come] to us.'

archangels, and from not knowing who is God, they instantly become even sharers of God's throne." Thus, we can see that for Chrysostom, humanity's living of the angelic life is truly a participation in the divine life.[280]

I.4.3. Pseudo-Dionysius

In contrast to Chrysostom, Pseudo-Dionysius presents the angels as being fairly static in their relationship with humanity. Their greatest interaction is to pass on the illumination and revelations of God, whatever the form this "passing on" takes. He does, however, take the time to point out one similarity between the two types of beings.

In *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Pseudo-Dionysius comments on the way that humans are sometimes named as angels in Scripture. Pointing out that while beings on a higher level possess all of the attributes and capacities of their subordinates, he maintains that the subordinates themselves actually possess those of their superiors, though to a lesser degree. Thus, there is no reason that Scripture cannot designate a human being as an angel, so long as that person is acting, as far as he or she is capable, in the role of an angel: as a messenger and imitator of the angelic mission to bring revelation.[281]

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[280] Lai, "Hermeneutics," 68; NPNF I.13.280: "For the great glory of this mystery is apparent among others also, but much more among these. For, on a sudden, to have brought men more senseless than stones to the dignity of Angels, simply through bare words, and faith alone, without any laboriousness, is indeed glory and riches of mystery: just as if one were to take a dog, quite consumed with hunger and the mange, foul, and loathsome to see, and not so much as able to move, but lying cast out, and make him all at once into a man, and to display him upon the royal throne. They were wont to worship stones and the earth; but they learned that themselves are better both than the heaven and the sun, and that the whole world serveth them; they were captives and prisoners of the devil: on a sudden they are placed above his head, and lay commands on him and scourge him: from being captives and slaves to demons, they are become the body of The Master of the Angels and the Archangels; from not knowing even what God is, they are become all at once sharers even in God's throne."

[281] Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Celestial Hierarchy," 176: "This is something which can rightly be said of all the divinely intelligent beings, and just as the first possess, in a complete fashion, the holy attributes of their subordinates, so too do the latter possess those of their superiors, though not in the same way but in a humbler mode. Hence, I see nothing wrong in the fact that the Word of God calls even our hierarch an 'angel,' for it is characteristic of him that like the angels he is, to the extent of which he is capable, a messenger and that he is raised up to imitate, so far as a man may, the angelic power to bring revelation."

Nevertheless, there is a significant dissimilarity as well. As we have said, Pseudo-Dionysius characterizes the angelic hierarchy as "conceptual" and "something out of this world." The angels have their own appropriate conceptions of God. Humanity, however, must rely on perceptible images to lift us hierarchically up to God and to contemplation of the divine, as far as our capacity allows. All beings desire this same participation in the divine, but are restricted by both capacity and merit.[282]

I.4.4. Bernard of Clairvaux

For Bernard of Clairvaux, the ways in which angels and humanity interact, and in what ways they are both similar and different, comprised the main angelological focus of his work, especially in his sermons on the Song of Songs. In these sermons, he writes that the angels are spirits, more sublime than those that live on the earth, clothed in flesh as they are.[283] Also he notes as important that what Christ accomplished on earth for humanity in the Incarnation had already been accomplished in heaven for the angels.[284] Christ was their righteousness, wisdom, holiness, and redemption; not redemption in the sense that He raised them up from being fallen, but that He had enabled them to not fall

[282] Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy," 197: "Of course, as I have said already, those beings and those orders which are superior to us are also incorporeal. Their hierarchy belongs to the domain of the conceptual and is something out of this world. We see our human hierarchy, on the other hand, as our nature allows, pluralized in a great variety of perceptible symbols lifting us upward hierarchically until we are brought as far as we can be into the unity of divinization. The heavenly beings, because of their intelligence, have their own permitted conceptions of God. For us, on the other hand, it is by way of the perceptible images that we are uplifted as far as we can be to the contemplation of what is divine. Actually, it is the same one whom all one-like beings desire, but they do not participate in the same way in this one and the same being. Rather, the share of the divine is apportioned to each in accordance with merit."

[283] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 5," *Song of Songs* 1.27. *Cantica Canticorum* 5.94: "Quo enim is involuntus carne ac terrae incola spiritus, ex consideratione sensibilium proficiens, gradatim quodammodo paulatimque nititur pervenire, eo ille caelestium habitator ingenita subtilitate ac sublimitate sua, in omni velocitate facilitateqe pertingit …"

[284] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 22," *Song of Songs* 2.17-8. *Cantica Canticorum* 5.312: "Quomodo ergo in pricipio erat Verbum, sed Verbum erat apud Deum, factum est autem quatenus esse inciperet apud homines, sic nihilominus in principio sapientia erat, erat iustitia, erat santificatio, et redemptio, sed angelis; ut esset et hominibus, fecit eum Pater haec omnia, et fecit quod Pater. Denique 'qui factus est,' inquit, 'nobis sapientia a Deo.' Et non ait simpliciter: 'qui factus est sapientia', sed: 'qui factus est nobis sapientia,' quoniam quod erat angelis, factus est et nobis."

and had guarded them from doing so.[285] Still, angels and humans may not be all that different where it counts. Bernard says that, "Surely the splendor of an angel and the splendor of a soul are one and the same."[286]

After the Fall, however, humanity changed significantly. Prelapsarian Adam had had the divine likeness, which had provided for companionship with the angels.[287] But afterwards, he was more like a beast than God, and associated with animals instead of angels.[288] Thus, humanity must rely on the angels for the revelation of certain truths. The angels preserve the truths that faith reveals, holding them until a time in which the believer is able to grasp them.[289] Furthermore, Bernard argues, this revelation is the source of mystical visions. When a mystic has his or her transportative experience, the content of that vision will be comprised of earthly symbols, in order either to make the vision more understandable, or to lessen the harshness of the divine on human senses. But

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[285] Ibid. *Cantica Canticorum* 5.312 & 14: "'At angelis', inquis, 'quonam modo redemptio fuerit non video. Nec enim auctoritas Scripturarum uspiam assentire videtur eos aliquando aut peccato exstitisse captivos, aut morti obnoxios, ut necessariam haberent redemptionem, exceptis dumtaxat illis qui, superbiae lapsu irremediabili corruentes, redimi deinceps non merentur. Si itaque angeli numquam redempti sunt, alii utique non egentes, alii non promerentes, illi quidem quia nec lapsi sunt, hi autem quia irrevocabiles sunt, quo pacto to Dominum Christum eis fuisse redemptionem dicis?' Audi breviter. Qui erexit hominem lapsum, dedit stanti angelo ne laberetur, sic illum de captivitate eruens, sicut hunc a captivitate defendens. Et hac ratione fuit aeque utrique redemptio, solvens illum et servans istum. Liquet ergo sanctis angelis Dominum Christum fuisse redemptionem, sicut iustitiam, sicut sapientiam, sicut sanctificationem; et nihilominus tamen haec ipsa quatuor esse factum propter homines, qui invisibilia De, nonnisi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta, conspicere possunt. Sic ergo omne quod erat angelis, factus et nobis. Quid? Sapientia, iustitia, sanctificatio, redemptio: sapientia in praedicatione, iustitia in absolutione peccatorum, sanctificatio in conversatione quam habuit cum peccatoribus, redemptio in passione quam sustinuit pro peccatoribus."

[286] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 74," *Song of Songs* 4.95. *Cantica Canticorum* 6.504: "Et, ni fallor, unus angeli animaeque decor ipsa est."

[287] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 35," *Song of Songs* 2.168. *Cantica Canticorum* 5.550: "Puto, dicerent iumenta, si loqui fas esset: 'Ecce, Adam factus est quasi unus ex nobis.' 'Cum in honore esset,' inquit. 'In quo honore?' quaeris. Habitabat in paradiso, et in loco voluptatis conversatio eus. Nihil molestiae, nihil indigentiae sentiebat, odoriferis stipatus malis, fulcitus floribus, gloria et honore coronatus, et constitutus super opera manuum Plasmatoris; magis autem ob insigne divinae similitudinis praecellebat; et erat illi sors et societas cum plebe angelorum et cum omni militia caelestis exercitus."

[288] Ibid., 2.170. *Cantica Canticorum* 5.554: "Hinc egregia creatura gregi admixta est, hinc bestiali similitudine Dei similitudo mutata est, hinc societas cum iumentis pro consortio angelorum inita est."

[289] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 31," *Song of Songs* 2.132. *Cantica Canticorum* 5.498: "Fides itaque lucem non exstinguit, sed custodit. Quidquid sane est illud quod videt angelus, hoc mihi umbra fidei servat, fideli sinu repositum, in tempore revelandum. Annon expedit tenere vel involutum quod nudum non capis?"

it is the angels that mediate the divine light through these symbols, rendering them more easily understood by the mystic.[290] The angels are also at work when the mystic communicates his or her vision to the rest of the church, inspiring clarity of speech and enjoyment within the mystic when he or she does so.[291]

Bernard also speaks of humanity becoming angelic. However, in contrast to that of which Chrysostom spoke, this transformation only occurs after the believer has died. When a believer dies, he or she becomes a member of the angelic choirs.[292] And not as some lesser group – the Christian dead become "equal in authority to the angels themselves."[293]

I.4.5. Peter Lombard

In contrast with Bernard, Lombard's focus, when considering how the angels relate to humanity, is on angels as guardians. Each person has a good angel that guards him or her, and urges the believer on towards goodness. Everyone also has an evil angel,

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[290] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 41," *Song of Songs* 2.206-7. *Cantica Canticorum* 6.74: "Cum autem divini aliquid raptim et veluti in velocitate corusci luminis interluxerit menti, spritiu excedenti, sive ad temperamentum nimii splendoris, sive ad doctrinae usum, continuo, nescio unde, adsunt imaginatoriae quaedam rerum inferiorum similitudines, infusis divinitus sensis convenienter accommodatae, quibus quodam modo adumbratus purissimus ille ac splendidissimus veritatis radius, et ipsi animae tolerabilior fiat, et quibus communicare illum voluerit capabilior. Existimo tamen ipsas formari in nobis sanctorum suggestionibus angelorum, sicut e contrario contrarias et malas ingeri immisiones per angelos malos non dubium est."

[291] Ibid., 2.207. *Cantica Canticorum* 6.76: "In quo mihi significare videtur non modo similitudines intus per angelso suggeri, sed nitorem quoque eloquii per ipsos extrinsecus ministrari, quo congrue atque decenter ornatae, et facilius ab auditoribus capiantur et delectabilius."

[292] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 26," *Song of Songs* 2.62-3. *Cantica Canticorum* 5.392 & 394: "Erat ambobus alterutrum grata praesentia, dulce consortium, suave colloquium; sed tantas utriusque delicias ego perdidi, tu mutasti. Et quidem immutatis illis retributo multa. Quanto fenore gaudiorum ac benedictionum cumulo habes pro me tantillo repositam tibi Christi praesentiam, nec dispendium sentis absentiae a nobis tuae, angelorum admixtus choris."

[293] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 77," *Song of Songs* 4.124. *Cantica Canticorum* 6.540: "'Sic ista asseris,' ait quis, 'ac si oculis tuis videris ea; sunt autem ab humanis seclusa aspectibus.' Cui ego: 'Si tu tuorum oculorum testimonium fidele putas, testimonium Dei maius est. Ait vero: 'Super muros tuos, Ierusalem, constitui custodes; tota die et tota nocte, in perpetuum non tacebunt.' — 'Sed de anglis,' inquis, 'id dictum.' — 'Non abnuo: 'Omnes sunt administratorii spiritus.' At quis me prohibeat itidem et de istis sentire, qui potentia quidem minime iam ipsis angelis impares sunt, affectu autem et misericordia eo nobis forsan germaniores exsistunt, quo natura coniunctiores?"

especially tasked with assaulting him or her. This is not to say that each angel only has a single charge — a particular angel could have several.[294]

Lombard also writes that there will also be a tenth order of angels formed from the ranks of righteous humans, but not in the same sense of the word as distinguishes the different orders of angels. Instead, what he says will occur is merely that the vacancies in the various ranks will be filled by humanity, rather than the formation of an entirely new order by ascended human beings. Collectively, then, these replacements could be called a 'tenth' order.[295] He also reports that Augustine says that the number of humans saved may be the same as the number of fallen angels — but Augustine also does not say that they will be more.[296]

I.4.6. Bonaventure

Bonaventure believed strongly in constant interaction between humanity and the angels, seeing them in all sorts of places and in all sorts of forms, desiring to share their revelations with other people. Angels play a central role in human comfort, he preached,

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[294] II.11.1; Lombard, *Sententiae,* 1.380-1: "Cum enim omnes Angeli boni nostrum bonum velint communiter que saluti omnium studeant, ille tamen, qui deputatus est alicui ad custodiam, eum specialiter hortatur ad bonum, sicut legitur de Angelo Tobiae et de Angelo Petri in Actibus Apostolorum; similiter et mali angeli, cum desiderent malum hominum … Ideoque dici oportet, unum eundemque Angelum, bonum vel malum, pluribus hominibus deputari ad custodiam vel exercitium, sive eodem tempore, sive diversis temporibus. Ideo autem dicimus eodem tempore, vel diversis temporibus, quia videtur quibusdam, quod omnes homines, qui sunt simul in aliquo tempore, singuli singulos Angelos habere possint, bonos vel malos, quia, licet maior sit numerus hominum, computatis in unum omnibus, qui fuerunt et sunt et futuri sunt, quam Angelorum, tamen, quia homines decedentibus hominibus succedunt, et ideo nunquam simul sunt in hac vita, Angeli vero nunquam decedunt, sed simul omnes sunt: ideo esse potest, ut singuli hominum, dum in hac vita sunt, singulos habeant Angelos bonos vel malos ad sui custodiam vel exercitium destinatos. Ceterum sive ita sint, sive non, non est dubitandum, unumquemque habere Angelum sibi deputatum, sive pluribus simul destinatus sit, sive uni singulariter. Nec est mirandum, unum Angelum pluribus hominibus ad custodiam deputari, cum uni homini plurium custodia deputetur, ita ut eorum quisque suum dicatur habere dominum vel episcopum vel abbatem."

[295] II.9.6; Ibid., 1.375: "Quod ergo legitur decimus ordo complendus de hominibus, ex tali sensu dictum fore accipi potest, quia de hominibus restaurabitur, quod in Angelis lapsum est, de quibus tot corruerunt, unde posset fieri decimus ordo."

[296] II.9.7; Ibid., 1.376: "Ecce aperte dicit, non minus de hominibus salvari, quam corruit de Angelis, sed plus non asserit."

in a sermon for the Feast of Mary Magdalene. There, he taught his audience that while the angels themselves may not cry, they carry the tears of the faithful up to God, thereby connecting human grief and suffering to the Father.[297] Recalling Isaiah's purification by a Seraph in Isaiah 6, Bonaventure took solace from the fact that that passage seems to indicate that God moves through ministers to purge sins from the believer so that he or she may truly contemplate the angels. Thus, the Christian should be willing to imitate the lives of not only those who had seen the angels — and to imitate Abraham, who so quickly moved to host his angelic visitors in true hospitality.[298]

But like both Chrysostom and Bernard, Bonaventure was cognizant of the ways in which humanity could so emulate the angels as to be considered as living an angelic life. Usually, the best means by which to live such a life was through an explicitly religious community, often (but not always!) a monastic one. Thus, in a sermon preached to a community of Beguines, Bonaventure called on them to live lives of obedience and moral

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[297] Keck, *Angels and Angelology,* 108-9; Bonaventure, "De s. Maria Magdalena," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 9.557: "Istae enim lacrymae faciunt invenire *angelos* et *Christum*; unde in Ioanne dicitur quod *Maria stabat iuxta monumentum plorans et prospexit in monumentum et vidit duos Angelos qui dixerunt ei: Mulier quid ploras*? Ecce, quod *Angelos* invenit, qui ipsam consolabantur. Audivi, quod angelus quandoque tergebat oculos plorantis. Istud est sacrificium, quod Angeli maxime diligunt; quia non possunt Deo ex se ipsis hoc offerre, eo quod lacrymari non possunt."

[298] Ibid., 52-3; Bonaventure, "De Sanctis Angelis (Sermo 1)," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 9.614: "*Suspice caelum et numera stellas, si potes. Et dixit ei: Sic erit semen tuum.* Verbum ultimum scribitur in Genesi et est dictum ad Abraham, qui pater fuit fidei nostrae, et in persona sua dictum est ad quemlibet fidelem contemplativum; in quo verbo excitatur mens illuminati, ut erigat oculos suos ad videndum luminiaria caeli, id est ad videndum pulcritudinem, quae est in dispositione hierarchica novem ordinum Angelorum. Homo non libenter audit loqui de eo quod non pertinet ad eum, sed quando sperat rem bonam consequi, libenter audit loqui de ea. Speramus Angelos habere concives nostros et illustrari luce ipsorum, vivificari vita ipsorm et repleri eorum gaudio; ideo libenter debemus audire loqui de Angelis. Viri sancti conversantur cum Angelis; Apostolus: *Nostra conversatio in caelis est*. Nos iacemus in pulvere et habemus labia polluta; nunc debemus loqui de angelicis spiritibus; Isaiae sexto: *Vae mihi! quia vir pollutus labiis ergo sum*. Nihilominus misit Dominus unum de Seraphim, qui accepit *calculum de altari* et purgavit labia Isaiae. Ita et, licet non sim dignus loqui de Angelis, quia homo (habens) labia polluta, rogabimus tamen Dominum, qui me potest mundare, ut det mihi gratiam suam etc."

and physical purity, as do the angels.[299] Likewise, in sermons given to his Franciscan community, he connected chastity and the angels, following tradition.[300]

For a Christian, the angelic life was not confined to physical existence, however. In his *Soliloquy*, Bonaventure argues that one should contemplate the angels, "for in some ways you resemble them by your nature, and you will be their companion in glory." Here, he is equating the Christian soul after death with the angels, echoing the tradition that taught that a righteous person would take an appropriate place in the heavenly hierarchy after death.[301] In his treatment of the life of St. Francis, Bonaventure holds him up as an example to imitate, sharing a vision in which Francis has taken his rightful place on a glorious throne vacated by a fallen angel.[302] But he does not stop there. Bonaventure also

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[299] Ibid., 122; Bonaventure, "De Sancto Marco Evangelista (Sermo 1)," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 9.523: "Sic ergo *puritas* et *obedientia, munditia* et *obedientia* faciunt sanctitatem in exteriori conversatione. Qui vult esse cum Angelis, oportet, ipsum vivere sicut Angeli; qui cum hominibus, sicut homines; qui vult vivere sicut daemones vel porci, eat cum daemonibus vel porcis. Si ergo tu velis bene conversari cum Religiosis, oportet, te vivere, sicut debent vivere boni Religiosi et Religiosae, videlicet in puritate, munditia et obedientia. Sic habemus, quod sanctitas debet esse primo in *corde*, et quod habet duas comites vel radices; et secundo, in *exteriori conversatione*, quae similiter debet habere duas comites."

[300] Ibid.; Bonaventure, "De Sanctis Angelis (Sermo 5)," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 9.628: "Secundo per Angelos manuducimur ad virtutem *munditiae*, et per Gabrielem specialiter; et hoc respectu eius quod est *intra.* In Matthaei vigesimo secundo: *In resurrectione neque nubent neque nubentur, sed erunt sicut Angeli Dei*, mundi scilicet et puri. Angeli Dei nesciunt corruptionem libidinis; et illi sunt iam quodammodo resuscitati, qui perpetuam virginitatem custodierunt, facti angeli. 'Semper solet Angelis cognata esse virginitas', dicit Hieronymus. Dicimus, quod differentia est inter caelum et ista inferiora, qui materia, quae est sub forma caeli, non appetit esse sub alia forma; terminatus est appetitus per formam illam; sed materia horum inferiorum est sicut meretrix, quae non est contenta viro uno; quia, cum est sub forma una, appetit esse sub alia. Talis differentia est hominum libidinosorum ad castos; quia ipsi libidinosi sequuntur passiones sui cordis, passiones sensuum et delectationes carnis, modo unam, modo aliam. Sed castitas reddit hominem conformem Deo; (in Deo) delecetur, non sequatur passiones carnis et delectationes; et iste est homo angelicus, qui solum delectatur in Deo et non curat de delectatione sensuum. Inde est, quod casti homines sunt sicut stellae in firmamento…"

[301] Ibid., 207; Bonaventure, "Soliloquium de quatuor mentalibus exercitiis," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 8.32: "… converte cogitationes tuas ad choros Angelorum, quibus quodam modo similis es in natura et concivis eris in gloria."

[302] Ibid., 27; Bonaventure, "Legenda S. Francisci," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. College of St. Bonaventura, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 8.521: "Et quoniam humilitatem tam in se quam in subditis cunctis praeferebat honoribus, amator humilium Deus altioribus ipsum dignum iudicabat fastigiis, secundum quod uni Fratri, viro virtutis et devotionis praecipuae, visio caelitus ostensa monstravit. Cum enim esset in comitatu viri Dei et una cum ipso in quadam ecclesia deserta ferventi oraret affectu, in ecstasi factus, vidit inter multas in caelo sedes unam ceteris digniorem, pretiosis ornatam lapidibus et omni

equated most monastic orders with the level of the hierarchy known as thrones, but then goes even further, linking the Franciscans with the cherubim, arguing that both parties share the same activities as means to approach God: speculation, study, and knowledge. But perhaps most radical is a passage in which he equates St. Francis with the Seraphim. In the *Hexaëmeron,* Bonaventure is telling the story of a visitation by a Seraphim to Francis while he was very ill. There, he comments that Francis had achieved ecstasy even before becoming a monk. The significance of this fact, as Bonaventure goes on to explain, is that ecstasy is the main marker of elevation to the highest level of contemplation — the Seraphic order. Thus, the visitation of the Seraphim, "… showed that this order was to correspond to this one [the Seraph], but that Francis was to attain it through hardships." [303] Clearly, given Francis' ecstasy, Bonaventure could only conclude that Francis had passed to a higher level than even other Franciscans, into the ranks of the perfectly contemplative Seraphim. In proposing such an intense equality between a specific human being and a specific order of angels, Bonaventure clearly demonstrates his intense belief that angels and humans can become so closely connected as to become not only equal, but nearly indistinguishable from each other — at least in St. Francis's case.

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gloria refulgentem. Miratus intra se praecelsi refulgentiam throni, anxia coepit cogitatione perquirere, quis ad illum deberet assumi. Audivit inter haec vocem dicentum sibi: 'Sedes ista unius de ruentibus fuit et nunc humili servatur Francisco'."

[303] Ibid., 147-8; Bonaventure, "Hexaëmeron," 5.440-1: "Tertius ordo est vacantium Deo secundum modum *sursumactivum*, scilicet ecstaticum seu excessivum. — Et dicebat: Quis enim iste est? Iste est ordo *seraphicus*. De isto videtur fuisse Franciscus. Et dicebat, quod etiam antequam haberet habitum, raptus fuit … Hic enim est maxima difficultas, scilicet in *sursumactione*, qui totum corpus enervatur, et nisi esset aliqua consolatio Spiritus sancti, non sustineret. Et in his consummabitur Ecclesia. Quis autem ordo iste futurus sit, vel iam sit, non est facile scire. … Iste ordo non florebit, nisi Christus appareat et patiatur in corpore suo mystico. — Et dicebat, quod illa apparitio Seraph beato Francisco, … ostendebat, quod iste ordo ille respondere debeat, sed tamen pervenire ad hoc per tribulationes. Et in illa apparitione magna mysteria erant."

I.4.7. Thomas Aquinas

While Aquinas does not seem to give this topic the emphasis that his contemporaries do, it would be wrong to say that the relationship between humanity and the angels was unimportant to him. Instead, we can say that he approached the question in a way consistent with his primarily philosophical hermeneutic. Much of what concerned Aquinas in his consideration of the relationship between humanity and the angels was *how* it could occur. Like Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas held that the angels illuminate humanity. But for him, this illumination occurs in two ways: first, the angels strengthen the human intellect to a level where it can receive the divine truth, and second, they offer intelligible, sensible images for the inferior human minds to grasp.[304]

Moreover, the angels are perfectly capable of influencing the human mind through the will, the imagination, or the senses themselves. Only God can directly alter the human will. But the angels can do so indirectly by either persuading or urging the person in question to take a certain action, or by rousing that person's passions in such a way that he or she makes the choice that the angels wish for him or her to make.[305] By 'influencing

[304] I.111.1; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 15.20: "… sicut inferiores angeli illuminantur per superiores, ita homines, qui sunt angelis inferiores, per eos illuminantur. Sed modus utriusque illuminationis quodammodo est similis, et quodammodo diversus. Dictum est enim supra quod illuminatio, quae est manifestatio divinae veritatis, secundum duo attenditur: scilicet secundum quod intellectus inferior confortatur per actionem intellectus superioris, et secundum quod proponuntur intellectui inferiori species intelligibiles quae sunt in superiori, ut capi possint ab inferiori. Et hoc quidem in angelis fit, secundum quod superior angelus veritatem universalem conceptam dividit secundum capacitatem inferioris angeli, ut supra dictum est. Sed intelectus humanus non potest ipsam intelligibilem veritatem nudam capere, quia connaturale est ei ut intelligat per conversionem ad phantasmata, up supra dictum est. Et ideo intelligibilem veritatem proponunt angeli hominibus sub similitudinibus sensibilium …"

[305] I.111.2; Ibid., 15.22 & 24: "Dicendum quod voluntas potest immutari dupliciter. Uno modo, ab interiori. Et sic cum motus voluntatis non sit aliud quam inclinatio voluntatis in rem volitam, soluis Dei est sic immutare voluntatem, qui dat naturae intellectuali virtutem talis inclinationis. Sicut enim inclinatio naturalis non est nisi a Deo qui dat naturam, ita inclinatio voluntaria non est nisi a Deo qui causat voluntatem. Alio modo, movetur voluntas ab exteriori. Et hoc in angelo est quidem uno modo tantum, scilicet a bono apprehenso per intellectum. Unde secundum quod aliquis est causa quod aliquid apprehendatur ut bonum ad appetendum, secundum hoc movet voluntatem. Et sic solus Deus efficaciter potest movere voluntatem; angelus autem et homo per modum suadentis, ut supra dictum est. Sed praeter

the imagination,' Aquinas means that the angels are capable of manipulating the spiritual and biological factors (*humor*) of the human psyche in such a way that visions or dreams are produced.[306] Lastly, an angel can manipulate a human's senses either by influencing the biological process of sensation itself or by producing an object to be sensed, such as when an angel appears in a body.[307]

In addition, like his scholastic colleague Bonaventure, Aquinas saw much the same relationship of cooperation between human nature and divine grace. Angelic influence, whether through advice or illumination, can always be declined or ignored, he wrote, based on an allegorical reading of Jeremiah 5:19: "We [the guardian angels] would have healed Babylon [uncooperative souls] but she was not healed."[308] But in disagreement with Bonaventure, Aquinas taught that a person became linked with his or her guardian

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hunc modum, etiam aliter movetur in hominibus volutas ab exteriori, scilicet ex passione existente circa appetitum sensitivum; sicut ex concupiscentia vel ira inclinatur voluntas ad aliquid volendum. Et sic etiam angeli, inquantum possunt concitare hujusmodi passiones, possunt voluntatem movere."

[306] I.111.3; Ibid., 15.26 & 28: "… natura corporalis obedit angelo ad motum localem. Illa ergo quae ex motu locali aliquorum corporum possunt causari, subsunt virtuti naturali angelorum. Manifestum est autem quod apparitiones imaginariae causantur interdum in nobis ex locali mutatione corporalium spirituum et humorum. … idest impressiones relictae ex sensibilium motionibus, quae in spiritibus sensualibus conserantur, et *movent principium senstivum*, ita quod fit quaedam apparitio, ac si tunc principium sensitivum a rebus ipsis exterioribus mutaretur. … Sicut igitur hoc fit per naturalem commotionem humorum; et quandoque etiam per voluntatem hominis, qui voluntarie imaginatur quod prius senserat; ita etiam hoc potest fieri virtute angeli boni vel mali …"

[307] I.111.4; Ibid., 15.30: "Dicendum quod sensus immutatur dupliciter. Uno modo, ab exteriori; sicut cum mutatur a sensibili. Alio modo, ab interiori; videmus enim quod, perturbatis spiritibus et humoribus, immutatur sensus; lingua enim infirmi, quia plena est cholerico humore, omnia sentit ut amara; et simile contingit in aliis sensibus. Utroque autem modo angelus potest immutare sensum hominum sua naturali virtute. Potest enim angelus opponere exterius sensui sensibile aliquod, vel a natura formatum vel aliquod de novo formando; sicut facit dum corpus assumit, ut supra dictum est. Similiter etiam potest interius commovere spiritus et humores, ut supra dictum est, ex quibus sensus diversimode immutentur."

[308] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 162. Keck is referring to I.113.6, the first argument and Aquinas's Answer; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 15.62 & 64: "Videtur quod angelus custos quandoque deserat hominem cujus custodiae deputatur. Dicitur enim *Jerem.*, ex persona angelorum, *Curavimus Babylonem, et not est curata; derelinquamus ergo eam.* … Dicendum quod custodia angeli ut ex supra dictis patet, est quaedam executio divinae providentiae circa homines facta. Manifestum est autem quod nec homo nec res aliqua totaliter divinae Providentiae subtrahitur; inquantum enim aliquid participat de esse, intantum subditur universali providentiae entium. Sed intantum Deus secudndum ordinem suae Providentiae dicitur hominem derelinquere, inquantum permittit hominem pati aliquem defectum vel poenae vel culpae. Similiter etiam dicendum est quod angelus custos nunquam totaliter dimittit hominem, sed ad aliquid interdum eum dimittit; prout scilicet non impedit quin subdatur alicui tribulationi vel etiam quin cadat in peccatum, secundum ordinem divinorum judiciorum. Et secundum hoc Babylon et domus Israel ab angelis derelictae dicuntur, quia angeli earum custodes non impediverunt quin tribulationibus subderentur."

angel at the moment of birth, not conception. This is due to his belief in the primacy of reason and its role in cooperation with the work of the angels. Given that a person is not a rational being until birth occurs, there would be no means for one to cooperate with the angels. Furthermore, he rejected the beliefs of Peter Damian and those like him, who taught that the guardian angel takes charge of a person during the sacrament of Baptism. Until a child is born, he concludes, the guardian angel that protects the mother also protects her child, as they are as yet an unseparated whole.[309]

Aquinas also considered whether or not the relationship between guardian angel and charge was such that an angel might feel sorrow should its charge not enter heaven. For him, the answer lies in the great extent to which an angel's will is aligned with God's will. Sorrow occurs when an event happens that is contrary to one's will, according to Aquinas, and given that nothing happens contrary to God's will, the angels do not experience sorrow or grief.[310]

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[309] Ibid., 160; Keck is referring to I.113.5, Aquinas's Answer and his reply to the third argument; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 15.60 & 62: "Dicendum quod, sicut Origines dicit, super hoc est duplex opinio. Quidam enim dixerunt quod angelus ad cutstodiam homini deputatur a tempore baptismi, alii vero quod a tempore nativitatis. Et hanc opinionem Hieronymus approbat, et rationabiliter. Beneficia enim quae dantur homini divinitus ex eo quod est christianus incipiut a tempore baptismi, sicut perceptio Eucharistiae et alia hujusmodi. Sed ea quae providentur homini a Deo, inquantum habet naturam rationalem, ex tunc ei exhibentur, ex quo nascendo talem naturam accipit. Et tale beneficium est custodia angelorum, ut ex praemissis patet. Unde statim a nativitate habet homo angelum ad sui custodiam deputatem. … Ad tertium dicendum quod puer quandiu est in materno utero, non totaliter est a matre separatus, sed per quandam colligationem est quodammodo adhuc aliquid ejus; sicut et fructus pendens in arbore est aliquid arboris. Et ideo probabiliter dici potest quod angelus qui est in custodia matris custodiat prolem in matris utero existentem. Sed in nativitate, quand separatur a matre, angelus ei ad custodiam deputatur, ut Hieronymus dicit."

[310] Ibid., 107-8. Keck is referring to I.113.7, Aquinas's Answer; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* 15.66: "Dicendum quod angeli non dolent neque de peccatis, neque de poenis hominum. Tristitia enim et dolor, secundum Augustinum, non est nisi de his quae contrariantur voluntati. Nihil autem accidit in mundo quod sit contrarium voluntati angelorum et aliorum beatorum, quia voluntas eorum totaliter inhaeret ordini divinae justitiae; nuhil autem fit in mundo nisi quod per divinam justitiam fit aut permittitur. Et ideo, simpliciter loquendo, nihil fit in mundo contra voluntatem beatorum." Incidentally, when Bernard taught on such topics, particularly angelic serenity, he based his answer on reflection on the meaning of the angelic title of 'thrones,' which implies stability. Nevertheless, he was rather unique in that he did believe the angels could suffer sorrow and grief, but rather than arrive at this conclusion due to 'formal philosophical discourse,' Bernard finds his answers in 'ad hoc exegesis.' Ibid., 108. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux*, On Consideration*, 148-9; "De Consideratione," 1.786.

As to what happens to a human being after death, Aquinas writes that a human being can actually be taken up into the angelic orders. However, he also makes a significant distinction. As we have seen previously, he argued that the angels are divided into orders according to both their natures and the gifts of grace they have received. Obviously, given that human and angelic natures are so completely dissimilar, a human being cannot ever be considered equal to an angel on the basis of *nature* itself. However, according to the gifts of *grace*, equality is possible: a human being can receive them to the extent that they become equal to the angels in that regard — even if such a gift goes beyond a human being's natural capacity.[311]

I.4.8. Gabriel Biel

For Biel, the relationship between humanity and the angels begins at the start of life. But he is not speaking of the good angels alone — the evil angels are likewise involved in an individual person's life. In contrast to both Bonaventure and Aquinas, he writes that at no time is a person outside the care of the angels, whether one is still in the womb or whether one has the use of one's reason.[312] The good angels are responsible for the care of the body and the spirit, by repulsing the coercion of the demons and their attempts to corrupt the soul. But if a person falls into sin, that individual's protection may be repelled. Despite this lack of protection, the evil angels cannot actually kill a person

[311] I.108.8; Ibid., 14.154: "Dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, ordines angelorum distinguuntur et secundum conditionem naturae et secundum dona gratiae. Si ergo considerentur angelorum ordines solum quantum ad gradum naturae, sic homines nullo modo assumi possunt ad ordines angelorum; quia semper remanebit naturarum distinctio. Quam quidam considerantes posuerunt quod nullo modo homines transferri possunt ad aequalitatem angelorum. Quod est erroneum; repugnat enim promissioni Christi, dicentis quod filii resurrectionis erunt aequales angelis in caelis. Illud enim quod est ex parte naturae se habet ut materiale in ratione ordinis; completivum vero est quod est ex dono gratiae, quae dependet ex liberalitate Dei, non ex ordine naturae. Et ideo per donum gratiae homines mereri possunt tantam gloriam ut angelis aequentur secundum singulos angelorum gradus. Quod est homines ad ordines angelorum assumi."

[312] Biel, *Sententiarum*, 2.287: "Sic in omni statu hominis effectum aliquem habere potest angelica custodia: in utero, extra uterum, ante rationis usum et postquam pervenerit ad rationis usum."

because the good angels will not let them (unless such a punishment is God's judgment). If they could, then no person in Creation would be left alive.[313]

Nevertheless, even if one has fallen into sin, the angels work to preserve him or her. Grace allows the sinner to leave the devil and damnation behind, through conversion by repentance. If a sinner is made tolerable to God, then the angels work to keep him or her from sliding back into sin. A hopeless, obstinate person may again become mired in sin; but the fewer sins one commits, the more evident the work of the angels.[314]

Biel also drew from the tradition that said that the lines between humanity and the angels could be blurred, and that such an occurrence would be especially likely after death. God the Father, through Christ as mediator, he writes, will effect a triple restoration of the heavenly City, destroyed as it was during the Fall: by redeeming humanity, reintegrating them among the angels, and filling the angels' abode by arranging the new members therein.[315]

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[313] Ibid.: "Respectu corporis 'consistit in repulsione' seu coercitione daemonis, 'ne opprimat corpora'; respectu animae 'in arcendo ipsum, ne pervertat animas', tollendo vel impediendo bona spiritualia. Sed cuilibet viatori, etiam obstinatissimo, potest impendi aliquis dictorum effectuum. Potest enim corpus obstinati a daemonis oppresione defendi. Neque enim patitur angelus custos hominem usque ad vitae terminum a daemone occidi, 'nisi quando aliter exigit sententia divini iudicii'; alioquin nullus talis viveret." We find Luther coming to much the same conclusion throughout his career.

[314] Ibid.: "Non enim reliquerent diabolus peccatorem gratia privatum et secundum praesentem iustitiam damnatum in vita, praveniens eius conversionem ad paenitentiam. Sic potest etiam quantumcumque obstinatus per custodiam angelicam praeservari, ne continue 'labatur in peius', nunc per occasionum subtractionem, nunc per modos alios, quo etsi non vitatur damnatio, tamen hoc agitur, ut saltem tolerabilior fiat, dum saltem ab aliquibus peccatis praeservatur per custodiam. Quae enim peccata non committeret homo desperatus et obstinatus in malitia. Quod enim multa con committit, operatur angelica custodia."

[315] Gabriel Biel, *Canonis Misse Expositio*, Heiko A. Oberman and William J. Courtenay, eds. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963), 1.155: "Pater ergo per christi mediationem illud tripliciter reedificavit, quia hominem a casu redemit, angelorum numerum ex hominibus reintegravit, et paratas angelorum mansiones hominum introductione repleri ordinavit."

I.5. What is their Relationship with the Church?

The final question, "What is the nature of the relationship between the angels and the Church?" proves to have been important for each of our theologians, though to differing degrees for each one.

I.5.1. Augustine

Strictly speaking, Augustine does not phrase his discussion of angels and their relationship with Christians in terms of "church." Mostly, especially in his work *City of God*, his discussion is in terms of the heavenly city as a place, "composed of holy angels and blessed spirits," where angels and Christians mingle after death — and in some cases, while the human half of the relationship still dwells on earth. Nevertheless, it is not too much of a stretch to read his comments as answering this question, given that he devotes a great deal of time to developing his ideas of how humanity and the angels interact in that heavenly Jerusalem.

Augustine argues that the heavenly city is populated by both angels and humans, who are "united" to the immortal angels. These people are either already present there as spirits, or still walking the earth.[316] God Himself, according to Augustine, foresaw that certain justified people would be adopted by the Holy Spirit and united to the angels after the eventual destruction of death itself.[317] Humanity, no matter what an individual's status in society may be, is tasked with enduring the evils of the physical world, thereby

[316] *City of God* XII.9, NPNF I.2.232; *De Civitate Dei* 2.364: "Cuius pars, quae coniugenda inmortalibus angelis ex mortalibus hominibus congregatur et nunc mutabiliter peregrinatur in terris uel in eis, qui mortem obierunt, secretis animarum receptaculis sedibusque requiescit, eodem Deo creante quem ad modum exorta sit, sicut de angelis dictum est, iam uideo esse dicendum."
[317] *City of God* XII.22, NPNF I.2.241; *De Civitate Dei* 2.380: "Sed praeuidebat etiam gratia sui populum piorum in adoptionem uocandum remissisque peccatis iustificatum Spiritu sancto sanctis angelis in aeterna pace sociandum, nouissima inimica morte destructa …"

grasping for themselves an "eminent place in that most holy and august assembly of angels and republic of heaven."[318] Christians and angels really do share much in common, such as good will, and the desire and capacity to worship the same God. While we do still differ from them in terms of the strength and character of our wills, our physicality, the fact that we must live on earth, or even distance itself is no true impediment to fellowship with them. What impedes this union, says Augustine, is too great a focus on the things of this world. And yet, "while we are being healed that we may eventually be as they are," the angels remain close to us, assisting Christians in belief in Jesus Christ and helping them draw nearer both to Him and to the angels themselves.[319]

But Augustine is also careful to delineate the angels' motivations in promoting human worship. Yes, the angels desire humanity's participation in relationship with them, and yes, they want humanity to share in citizenship in the City of God. But the angels' goal is for humanity to worship God alongside them, not to worship *them.* Their only desire is that humanity be as blessed as they themselves are, and they are pleased when humanity adores and reverences the holy Trinity as they do.[320] As he says:

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[318] *City of God* II.19, NPNF I.2.34; *De Civitate Dei* 1.51: "… tolerare Christi famuli iubentur, siue sint reges siue principes siue iudices, siue milites siue prouniciales, siue diuites siue pauperes, siue liberi siue serui, utriuslibet sexus, etiam pessimam, si ita necesse est, flagitiosissimamque rem publicam et in illa angelorum quadam sanctissima atque augustissima curia caelestique re publica, ubi Dei uoluntas lex est, clarissimum sibi locum etiam ista tolerantia comparare."

[319] *City of God* VIII.25, NPNF I.2.163; *De Civitate Dei* 1.245-6: "… sed per bonae uoluntatis similitudinem, qua cum illis sumus et cum illis uiuimus et cum illis Deum quem colunt colimus, etsi eos carnalibus oculis uidere non possumus; in quantum autem dissimilitudine uoluntatis et fragilitate infirmitatis miseri sumus, in tantum ab eis longe sumus uitae merito, non corporis loco. Non enim quia in terra condicione carnis habitamus, sed si inmunditia cordis terrena sapimus, non eis iungimur. Cum uero sanamur, ut quales ipsi sunt simus: fide illis interim propinquamus, si ab illo no fieri beatos, a quo et ipsi facti sunt, etiam ipsis fauentibus credimus."

[320] *City of God* X.25, NPNF I.2.196; *De Civitate Dei* 1.300: "In hac autem spe nunc constituti agamus quod sequitur, et simus nos quoque pro modulo nostro angeli Dei, id est nuntii eius, adnuntiantes eius uoluntatem et gloriam gratiamque laudantes. Vnde cum dixisset: *Ponere in Deo spem meam, ut adnuntiem*, inquit, *omnes laudes tuas in portis filiae Sion.* Haec est gloriosissima ciuitas Dei; haec unum Deum nouit et colit;

> It is very right that these blessed and immortal spirits, who inhabit celestial dwellings, and rejoice in the communications of their Creator's fullness, firm in His eternity, assured in His truth, holy by His grace, since they compassionately and tenderly regard us as miserable mortals, and wish us to become immortal and happy, do not desire us to sacrifice to themselves, but to Him whose sacrifice they know themselves to be in common with us. For we and they together are the one city of God, to which it is said in the psalm, 'Glorious things are spoken of the, O city of God;' the human part sojourning here below, the angelic aiding from above.[321]

Thus, the correct direction of the Christian's sacrifice — visible sacrifice through goods and invisible through self — is to God. Then the angels will rejoice and assist the Christian as far as they are capable. But if the Christian offers the angels worship or sacrifice, says Augustine, they decline it and visibly forbid it when necessary.[322] The angels' reluctance only makes sense: Christ came to humanity as a mediator in His humanity, revealing that we have no need for other mediators. The Christian now has direct access to "the participation of His divinity." Furthermore, Christ does not lead humanity to the angels, as he might were we to be justified and saved by participating in

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hanc angeli sancti adnuntiauerunt, qui nos ad eius societatem inuitauerunt civesque suos in illa esse uolerunt; quibus non placet ut eos colamus tamquam nostros deos, sed cum eis et illorum et nostrum Deum; nec eis sacrificemus, sed cum ipsis sacrificium simus Deo. Nullo itaque dubitante, qui haec deposita maligna obstinatione considerat, omnes inmortales beati, qui nobis non inuident (neque enim si inuiderent, essent beati), sed potius nos diligunt, ut et nos cum ipsis beati simus, plus nobis fauent, plus adiuuant, quando unum Deum cum illis colimus, Patrem et Filium, et Spiritum sanctum, quam si eos ipsos per sacrificia coleremus."

[321] *City of God* X.7, NPNF I.2.184; *De Civitate Dei* 1.279-80: "Merito illi in caelestibus sedibus constituti inmortales et beati, qui creatoris sui participatione congaudent, cuicus aeternitate firmi, cuius ueritate certi cuius munere sancti sunt, quoniam nos mortales et miseros, ut inmortales beatique simus, misericorditer diligunt, nolunt nos sibi sacrificari, sed ei, cuius et ipsi nobiscum sacrificium se esse nouerunt. Cum ipsis enim sumus una ciuitas Dei, cui dicitur in psalmo: *Gloriosissima dicta sunt de te, ciuitas Dei;* cuius pars in nobis peregrinatur, pars in illis opitulatur. De illa quippe superna ciuitate, ubi Dei uoluntas intellegibilis atque incommutabilis lex est, de illa superna quodam modo curia (geritur namque ibi cura de nobis) ad nos ministrata per angelos sancta illa scriptura descendit, ubi legitur: *Sacrificans diis eradicabitur, nisi Domino soli.* Huic scripturae, huic legi, praeceptis talibus tanta sunt adtestata miracula, ut satis appareat, cui nos sacrificari uelint inmortales ac beati, qui hoc nobis uolunt esse quod sibi."

[322] *City of God* X.19, NPNF I.2.192-3; *De Civitate Dei* 1.293-4: "Quocirca sicut orantes atque laudantes ad eum dirigimus significantes uoces, cui res ipsas in corde quas significamus offerimus: ita sacrificantes non alteri uisibile sacrificium offerendum esse nouerimus quam illi, cuius in cordibus nostris inuisibile sacrificium nos ipsi esse debemus. Tunc nobis fauent nobisque congaudent atque ad hoc ipsum nos pro suis uiribus adiuuant angeli quique uirtutesque superiores et ipsa bonitate ac pietate potentiores. Si autem illis haec exhibere uoluerimus, non libenter accipiunt, et cum ad homines ita mittuntur, ut eorum praesentia sentiatur, apertissime uetant."

their nature. Instead, He leads the Christian to the Trinity, to the same immortality and blessedness in which the angels themselves participate.[323] Thus, "He says that He shall flow down as this river, that he may as it were pour Himself from things above to things beneath, and make men the equals of the angels."[324]

As we can see, underlying such comments is Augustine's conclusion that the most common way in which the union of Christians and angels is revealed is in terms of their worship. "In heaven, human beings will worship God just as the angels do."[325] This underlying current reinforces the conclusion that although Augustine himself does not phrase it in this way, he really is discussing the relationship between angels and the church.

I.5.2. Chrysostom

John Chrysostom's stance on the relationship between the angels and the church can perhaps be best summed up by a quotation from his *Homily 50* on Matthew: "The church is not a gold foundry nor a workshop for silver, but an assembly of angels."[326] The idea of angels gathered around the altar during worship, particularly during the Eucharist,

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[323] *City of God* IX.15, NPNF I.2.174; *De Civitate Dei* 1.263: "Nec tamen ob hoc mediator est, quia Verbum; maxime quippe inmortale et maxime beatum Verbum longe est a mortalibus miseris; sed mediator, per quod homo, eo ipso utique ostendens ad illud non solum beatum, uerum etiam beatificum bonum non oportere quaeri alios medatores, per quos arbitremur nobis peruentionis gradus esse moliendos, quia beatus et beatificus Deus factus particeps humanitatis nostrae compendium praebuit participandae diuinitatis suae. Neque enim nos a mortalitate et miseria liberans ad angelos inmortales beatosque ita perducit, ut eorum participatione etiam nos inmortales et beati simus; sed ad illam Trinitatem, cuius et angeli participatione beati sunt. Ideo quando in forma serui, ut mediator esset, infra angelos esse uoluit, in forma Dei supra angelos mansit; idem in inferioribus uia uitae, qui in superioribus uita."

[324] *City of God* XX.21, NPNF I.2.440; *De Civitate Dei* 2.737: "Hoc flumen se in eos declinare dicit, quibus tantam beatitudinem pollicetur, ut intellegamus in illius felicitatis regione, quae in caelis est, hoc flumine omnia satiari; sed quia et terrenis corporibus pax inccoruptionis atque inmortalitatis inde influet, ideo declinare se dixit hoc flumen, ut de supernis quodam modo etiam inferiora perfundat et homines aequales angelis reddat."

[325] Van Fleteren, "Angels," 21.

[326] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, 177: NPNF I.10.303.

was important to him.[327] Tuschling names several examples,[328] such as: "angels stand around the priest and the [earthly] sanctuary is filled with the powers of heaven" (*On Priesthood* 6.4);[329] "remember with whom you stand at the moment of the mysteries, with the cherubim and seraphim" (*Homily 14* on Ephesians);[330] "when entering a church, be mindful that you are singing with the seraphim" (*Homily 19* on Matthew).[331]

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[327] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, 79. Cf. Chrysostom, *Homily XXIV* (Acts 10:44,46), NPNF I.11.160-1: "Again I see others stand talking while Prayer is going on; while the more consistent of them (do this) not only during the Prayer, but even when the Priest is giving the Benediction. O, horror! When shall there be salvation? when shall it be possible for us to propitiate God? — Soldiers go to their diversion, and you shall see them, all keeping time in the dance, and nothing done negligently, but, just as in embroidery and painting, from the wellordered arrangement in each individual part of the composition, there results at once an exceeding harmony and good keeping, so it is here: we have one shield, one head, all of us (in common): and if but some casual point be deranged by negligence, the whole is deranged and is spoilt, and the good order of the many is defeated by the disorder of the one part. And, fearful indeed to think of, here you come, not to a diversion, not to act in a dance, and yet you stand disorderly. Know you not that you are standing in company with angels? with them you chant, with them sing hymns, and do you stand laughing? Is it not wonderful that a thunderbolt is not launched not only at those (who behave thus), but at us? For such behavior might well be visited with the thunderbolt."

[328] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, 203.

[329] NPNF I.9.76: "And whenever he invokes the Holy Spirit, and offers the most dread sacrifice, and constantly handles the common Lord of all, tell me what rank shall we give him? What great purity and what real piety must we demand of him? For consider what manner of hands they ought to be which minister in these things, and of what kind his tongue which utters such words, and ought not the soul which receives so great a spirit to be purer and holier than anything in the world? At such a time angels stand by the Priest; and the whole sanctuary, and the space round about the altar, is filled with the powers of heaven, in honor of Him who lieth thereon."

[330] NPNF I.13.120. Chrysostom continues, on page 121: "'Our Father!' But what? is this all? Hear also the words, which follow, 'which art in Heaven.' The moment thou sayest, 'Our Father, which art in Heaven,' the word raises thee up, it gives wings to thy mind, it points out to thee that thou hast a Father in Heaven. Do then nothing, speak nothing of things upon earth. He hath set thee amongst that host above, He hath numbered thee with that heavenly choir. Why dost thou drag thyself down? Thou art standing beside the royal throne, and thou revilest? Art thou not afraid lest the king should deem it an outrage? Why, if a servant, even with us, beats his fellow-servant or assaults him, even though he do it justly, yet we at once rebuke him, and deem the act an outrage; and yet dost thou, who art standing with the Cherubim beside the king's throne, revile thy brother? Seest thou not these holy vessels? Are they not used continually for only one purpose? Does any one ever venture to use them for any other? Yet art thou holier than these vessels, yea, far holier. Why then defile, why contaminate thyself? Standest thou in Heaven, and dost thou revile? Hast thou thy citizenship with Angels, and dost thou revile? Art thou counted worthy the Lord's kiss, and dost thou revile? Hath God graced thy mouth with so many and great things, with hymns angelic, with food, not angelic, no, but more than angelic, with His own kiss, with His own embrace, and dost thou revile?"

[331] NPNF I.10.130: "From beneath, out of the heart, draw forth a voice, make thy prayer a mystery. Seest thou not that even in the houses of kings all tumult is put away, and great on all sides is the silence? Do thou also therefore, entering as into a palace,—not that on the earth, but what is far more awful than it, that which is in heaven,—show forth great seemliness. Yea, for thou art joined to the choirs of angels, and art in communion with archangels, and art singing with the seraphim. And all these tribes show forth much goodly order, singing with great awe that mystical strain, and their sacred hymns to God, the King of all. With these then mingle thyself, when thou art praying, and emulate their mystical order."

Chrysostom makes a similar comment in his *Homily 14* on Hebrews, that when the Sanctus is sung, it is sung by both the human and angelic worshippers — and in front of an altar that is both earthly and heavenly.[332] In this, we find Chrysostom presenting us with a conception of worship that sees no difference between the actions that take place in heaven and those that take place on earth; in fact, the sanctuary itself seems to occupy both realms at once. He goes on to say in *Homily 16*:

> Let us no longer continue on the earth; for even now it is possible for him that wishes it, not to be on the earth. For to be and not to be on the earth is the effect of moral disposition and choice. For instance: God is said to be in heaven. Wherefore? not because He is confined by space, far from it, nor as having left the earth destitute of His presence, but by His relation to and intimacy with the angels. If then we also are near to God, we are in heaven.[333]

God is in heaven — but God is also throughout Creation. What makes heaven heaven is that the angels (and perfected Christians) are present there as well.[334] But this heaven is not limited to the communion of only-spiritual beings, but available to humanity as well. Heaven is literally present on earth in the confines of the worship service, or at any other time when God's presence intrudes into Creation. When the minister preaches, he speaks with the voice of God both to heaven and to earth, to an audience of humanity and of

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[332] NPNF I.14.433-4: "Here we must apply our minds attentively, and consider the Apostolic wisdom; for again he shows the difference of the Priesthood. "Who" (he says) "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." What are the heavenly things he speaks of here? The spiritual things. For although they are done on earth, yet nevertheless they are worthy of the Heavens. For when our Lord Jesus Christ lies slain [as a sacrifice], when the Spirit is with us, when He who sitteth on the right hand of the Father is here, when sons are made by the Washing, when they are fellow-citizens of those in Heaven, when we have a country, and a city, and citizenship there, when we are strangers to things here, how can all these be other than "heavenly things"? But what! Are not our Hymns heavenly? Do not we also who are below utter in concert with them the same things which the divine choirs of bodiless powers sing above? Is not the altar also heavenly? How? It hath nothing carnal, all spiritual things become the offerings. The sacrifice does not disperse into ashes, or into smoke, or into steamy savor, it makes the things placed there bright and splendid. How again can the rites which we celebrate be other than heavenly?"

[333] NPNF I.14.445.

[334] Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, 197-8.

angels.[335] And in fact, sometimes angels learn the things of God from the Holy Spirit, at the same time that humanity does, in and through the church: "… even in this we have been not a little honored, that the Angels learned things which before they knew not with us …".[336]

But the power of God's word as spoken by the human ministry can do more than just bring humans and angels together. Chrysostom says that – so long as one is truly receptive to it – the Word can elevate humanity above all other creatures, and having brought them into the angelic condition, allows believers to live on earth as if it were heaven itself.[337] This is the climax of the human-angelic relationship for Chrysostom: that by encountering the Word through the church in which believers participate with the angels, believers will actually become equal to the angels. At one level, by participating in the Eucharist, believers call the angels to them.[338] But there is more to it than that. By following the commandments and drawing closer to the Spirit that one finds in the

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[335] Chrysostom, "Homily 1," *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John,* NPNF I.14.2: "… he effects all with his tongue, uttering a voice which is sweeter and more profitable than that of any harper or any music. All heaven is his stage; his theater, the habitable world; his audience, all angels; and of men as many as are angels already, or desire to become so, for none but these can hear that harmony aright, and show it forth by their works …"

[336] Ibid.: "For he will say nothing to us as a man, but what he saith, he will say from the depths of the Spirit, from those secret things which before they came to pass the very Angels knew not; since they too have learned by the voice of John with us, and by us, the things which we know. And this hath another Apostle declared, saying, "To the intent that unto the principalities and powers might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. iii. 10.) If then principalities, and powers, and Cherubim, and Seraphim, learned these things by the Church, it is very clear that they were exceedingly earnest in listening to this teaching; and even in this we have been not a little honored, that the Angels learned things which before they knew not with us ..."

[337] Ibid., NPNF I.14.1: "… when a man is speaking from heaven, and utters a voice plainer than thunder? for he has pervaded the whole earth with the sound; and occupied and filled it, not by the loudness of the cry, but by moving his tongue with the grace of God. And what is wonderful, this sound, great as it is, is neither a harsh nor an unpleasant one, but sweeter and more delightful than all harmony of music, and with more skill to soothe; and besides all this, most holy, and most awful, and full of mysteries so great, and bringing with it goods so great, that if men were exactly and with ready mind to receive and keep them, they could no longer be mere men nor remain upon the earth, but would take their stand above all the things of this life, and having adapted themselves to the condition of angels, would dwell on earth just as if it were heaven."

[338] Chrysostom, "Homily 46," *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John*, NPNF I.14.164: "This blood, if rightly taken, driveth away devils, and keepeth them afar off from us, while it calleth to us Angels and the Lord of Angels. For wherever they see the Lord's blood, devils flee, and Angels run together."

church, the believer will become "nothing inferior to the Angels"[339] – even if he or she had spent an entire life of evil.[340] The Holy Spirit gives eternal life and angelic conversation – "the powers of the world to come," as Chrysostom quotes – to those who focus on heavenly things at the expense of earthly things.[341] In fact, God has brought humanity and the angels together into the same church:

> He hath set over all one and the same Head, i.e., Christ according to the flesh, alike over Angels and men. That is to say, He hath given to Angels and men one and the same government; to the one the Incarnate, to the other God the Word. Just as one might say of a house which has some part decayed and the other sound, He hath rebuilt the house, that is to say, He has made it stronger, and laid a firmer foundation. So also here He hath brought all under one and the same Head.[342]

I.5.3. Pseudo-Dionysius

In contrast to Chrysostom, Pseudo-Dionysius says little about the interaction between the angels and the church. What he does say, however, answers the question succinctly. For Pseudo-Dionysius, the main way in which the angels interact with the church is — not surprisingly — by serving as a source of divine illumination. As he writes in *The Celestial Hierarchy*:

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[339] Chrysostom, "Homily 75," *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John*, NPNF I.14.276: "Everything that is spiritual brings the greatest gain, just as everything that is worldly the utmost loss. Let us then draw to us the invincible aid of the Spirit, by keeping the commandments, and then we shall be nothing inferior to the Angels."

[340] Chrysostom, "Homily 12," *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John,* NPNF I.14.41: "Why should one speak of the wisdom of the commands, the excellency of the heavenly laws, the good ordering of the angelic polity? For such a life hath He proposed to us, such laws appointed for us, such a polity established, that those who put these things into practice, immediately become angels and like to God, as far as is in our power, even though they may
have been worse than all men."

[341] Chrysostom, "Homily 9," *Homilies on Hebrews*, NPNF I.14.411: "'And tasted,' he says, 'the good word of God'; and he does not unfold it; 'and the powers of the world to come,' for to live as Angels and to have no need of earthly things, to know that this is the means of our introduction to the enjoyment of the worlds to come; this may we learn through the Spirit, and enter into those sacred recesses. What are 'the powers of the world to come'? Life eternal, angelic conversation. Of these we have already received the earnest through our Faith from the Spirit."

[342] Chrysostom, "Homily 1," *Homilies on Ephesians*, NPNF I.13.54.

> Now the most holy hierarchy among the beings of heaven possesses the native sacramental power of a most completely immaterial conception of God and of things divine. It is their lot to be as like God and as imitative of God as is possible. These first beings around God lead others and with their light guide them toward this sacred perfection. To the sacred orders farther down the scale they generously bestow, in proportion to their capacity, the knowledge of the workings of God, knowledge forever made available as a gift to themselves by that divinity which is absolute perfection and which is the source of wisdom for the divinely intelligent beings. The ranks coming in succession to these premier beings are sacredly lifted up by their mediation to enlightenment in the sacred workings of the divinity. They form the orders of initiates and they are named as such. In succession to this heavenly and transcendent hierarchy the divinity extends its most sacred gifts into our domain and, in the words of scripture, it deals with us as though we were "babes."[343]

At all levels of hierarchy, then, the higher orders serve as mediators of God's divine light, order, and activity — and the transition from angelic hierarchy to ecclesial hierarchy is no obstacle. Higher orders of both angels and ecclesiarchy, says Pseudo-Dionysius, are occupied by beings with sharper, more "godlike" minds, whose task it is to reveal God's illumination to lower orders to an extent appropriate to those orders' capacities, and to do so graciously and without jealousy, lifting them up to the divine.[344]

I.5.4. Bernard of Clairvaux

Bernard, too, wishes to show how the heavenly hierarchy is the perfect model for the earthly ecclesiastical hierarchy, and thus spends time on the subject in *On Consideration.*[345] For him, just as the various ranks of angels are arranged under one

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[343] Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy," 233-4.
[344] Ibid, 236: "Therefore the founding source of all invisible and visible order quite properly arranges for the rays of divine activity to be granted first to the more godlike beings, since theirs are the more discerning minds, minds with the native ability to receive and to pass on light, and it is through their mediation that this source transmits enlightenment and reveals itself to inferior beings in proportion to capacity. It is therefore the task of the first ranks of those beholding God to reveal fittingly and without jealousy to those of second rank the sacred sights which they behold. To initiate others into the hierarchy is the task of those who have with perfect understanding learned the divine secret of all that has to do with their hierarchy and to whom the power of sacramental initiation has been granted."
[345] Keck, *Angels and Angelology,* 88.

God, so are the ecclesial ranks arranged under the Pope. Nor should those of lower clerical rank chafe under their superiors; one never hears of angels complaining about being under the archangels![346]

Bernard also wrote that Christians share the company of angels while praying, and that the angels bear those prayers to heaven to the Father.[347] In fact, Bernard would say that it is these three entities that comprise the church. From Sermon 78 on the Song of Songs: "In treating of this great mystery, which the teacher of the Gentiles interpreted as the holy and chaste union of Christ and his Church, the very work of our salvation, I find three agents cooperating together: God, and angel, and man."[348] As humanity gives voice to its songs of praise and worship, the angels are present, leaving only to carry those praises to the Father in heaven, and then returning, bearing God's gifts and graces to God's people[349] – and while they remain, they join the earthly church in song.[350] Furthermore, the angels join the church on earth in its praise because it is so very like their church in heaven. The Bride (that is, the Church) should take comfort in this

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[346] Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*, 102-3; "De Consideratione," 1.730: "Ego enim propter similitudinem dictum reor, quod sicut illic Seraphim et Cherubim, ac ceteri quique usque ad angelos et archangelos, ordinatur sub uno capite Deo, ita hic quoque sub uno summo Pontifice primates vel patriarchae, archiepiscopi, episcopi, presbyteri vel abbates, et reliqui in hunc modum. Non est parvi pendendum quod et Deum habet auctorem, et de caelo ducit originem. Quod si dicat episcopus: 'Nolo esse sub archiepiscopo,' aut abbas: 'Nolo oboedire episcopo,' hoc de caelo non est. Nisi tu forte angelorum quempiam dicentem audisti: 'Nolo sub archangelis esse,' aut ex alio quolibet inferiorum ordinum aliquem non ferentem subesse cuiquam, nisi Deo."

[347] Keck, *Angels and Angelology,* 169.

[348] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 78," *Song of Songs* 4.129; *Cantica Canticorum* 6.548: "In explicatione sacramenti magni — illud loquor quod Doctor gentium interpretatus est in Christo et in Ecclesia, sanctum castumque connubium, ipsum est opus nostrae salutis — in eo, inquam, tres sibi invicem cooperantur: Dues, angelus, homo."

[349] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 7," *Song of Songs* 1.41; *Cantica Canticorum* 5.114 & 116: "Eapropter attendite principes vestros, cum statis ad orandum vel psallendum, et state cum reverentia et disciplina, et gloriamini quia angeli vestri quotidie vident faciem Patris. Nimirum missi in ministerium propter nos, qui hereditatem capimus salutis, devotionem nostram in superna ferunt, referunt gratiam. Usurpemus officium quorum sortimur consortium, ut in ore infantium et lactentium perficatur laus. Dicamus eis: *Psallite Deo nostro, psallite;* atque adiamus eos vicissim respondentes: *Psallite Regi nostro, psallite.*"

[350] Ibid.: "Laudem ergo cum caeli cantoribus in commune ducentes, utpote cives sanctorum et domestici Dei, psallite sapenter."

likeness, because it reveals a heavenly source. The church loves, adores, and worships one Christ, just as the angels do – and does so even while dwelling in a physical body.[351] Despite the frailty of bodily existence, the church on earth should not feel deficient when compared to the church in heaven, even though that church is inhabited by the nine choirs of angels. The only distinctions that remain between the two churches and two kinds of believers are those of degrees of bliss. And in any case, the angels are constantly at work, serving humanity out of an overflowing love and desire to share the glory they possess with the church that remains on earth.[352]

Still, for Bernard, to speak of any division between the church in heaven and the church on earth is to create a false distinction. He argues that they are the one and the same church of Christ. While on earth, humanity gains its access to Christ through people or through holy books, finding God where it can through means by which it can understand what it has found. The angels receive Christ in His fullness, taught directly by God. But in both cases, it is the same Christ that each party accesses[353] – and thus the

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[351] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 27," *Song of Songs* 2.78-9; *Cantica Canticorum* 5.418: "Nam si propter corpus, quod de terra habet, tabernaculo Cedar de assimilat, cur non et propter animam, quae de caelo est, caelo aeque similem esse glorietur, praesertim cum vita testetur originem, testetur naturae dignitatem et patriae? Unum Deum adorat et colit, quomodo angeli; Christum super omnia amat, quomodo angeli; casta est, quomodo angeli, idque in carne peccati et fragili corpore, quod non angeli; quaerit postremo et sapit quae apud illos sunt, non quae super terram. Quod evidentius caelestis insigne originis, quam ingenitam et in regione dissimilitudinis retinere similitudinem, gloriam caelibis vitae in terra et ab exsule usurpari, in corpore denique paene bestiali vivere angelum?"

[352] Ibid., 2.78; *Cantica Canticorum* 5.416 & 418: "Prorsus de hoc caelo minime sibi indignum ducit ducere similitudinem. Hoc extentum sicut pellis, non spatiis tamen locorum, sed affectibus animorum; hoc miris variisque artificis distinctum operibus. Divisiones autem sunt, non colorum, sed beatitudinum. Nam alios quidem posuit Angelos, alios autem Archangelos, alios vero Virtutes, alios Dominationes, alios Principatus, alios Potestates, alios Thronos, alios Cherubim atque alios Seraphim. Sic stellatum caelum hoc, sic depicta haec pellis. Haec una de pellibus mei Salomonis, et haec praecipua in omni ornatu multiformis gloriae eius. Habet autem grandis ista pellis quam plurimas in se aeque Salomonis pelles, quoniam unusquisque beatus et sanctus, qui ibi est, pellis utique est Salomonis. Benigni siquidem sunt atque extenti in caritate, pertingentes usque ad nos, quibus gloriam, quam habent, non invident, sed optant, ita ut ex ipsis huius rei gratia demorari apud nos non graventur, seduli circa nos et curam gerentes nostri, omnes administratorii spiritus, in ministerium missi propter eos qui hereditatem capiunt salutis."

[353] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 58," *Song of Songs* 3.62-3; *Cantica Canticorum* 6.210 & 212: "Et iuxta litteram quidem durum sonat; secundum spiritualem autem intelligentiam dulce sapit, si subtiliter

same Christ that brings both churches together into a single unity. From Bernard's Sermon 27:

> Just as he wished to form one flock of the scattered flocks of sheep, that there might be one flock and one shepherd, so, although from the beginning he had for bride the multitude of angels, it pleased him to summon the Church from among men and unite it with the one from heaven, that there might be but the one bride and one Bridegroom. The one from heaven perfects the earthly one; it does not make two. Hence he says: "My perfect one is only one." Their likeness makes them one, one now in their similar purpose, one hereafter in the same glory.[354]

I.5.5. Peter Lombard

In his *Sentences,* Lombard only speaks only briefly about this relationship — and then, only by pointing to the authority of the previous tradition. Yet he remains clear on the importance of the angels in the life of the church, particularly during worship services. Calling on Gregory, Lombard writes that during the Mass, at the same moment the host is transformed before the priest on the altar, the angels carry the body of Christ to heaven and share in it.[355] And then, referring to Augustine, he writes that the Mass itself

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advertamus quomodo utrarumque ovium pastor, Dei scilicet sapientia Christus, unum idemque pabulum veritatis aliter in terris, aliter in caelestibus gregibus suis administret. Nam nos quidem mortales homines interim in loco peregrinationis nostrae, in sudore vultus nostri comedere panem nostrom necesse habemus, foris illum in labore et aerumna mendicantes, id est vel a doctis viris, vel a sacris libris, vel certe per ea quae facta sunt, invisibilia Dei intellecta conspicients; angeli autem in omni plenitudine, etsi non a semetipsis, tanta facilitate, quanta et accipiunt unde beate vivunt. Sunt enim omnes docibiles Dei: quod sane electos hominum quandoque assecuturos certa veritate promittitur, et nondum esperiri tribuitur felicitate secura."

[354] Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon 27," *Song of Songs* 2.79. *Cantica Canticorum* 5.420: "Mira res! Ad sponsam veniebat, et absque sponsa non veniebat. Quaerebat sponsam, et sponsa cum ipso erat. An duae erant? Absit. *Una est enim,* ait, *columba mea.* Sed sicut de diversis ovium gregibus unum facere voluit, ut sit unum ovile et unus pastor, ita cum haberet sponsam inhaerentem sibi a principio multitudinem angelorum, placuit ei et de hominibus convocare Ecclesiam, atque unire illi quae de caelo est, ut sit una sponsa et sponsus unus. Ergo ex adiecta ista, perfecta est illa, non duplicata; et agnoscit de se dictum: *Una est perfecta mea.* Porro unam conformitas facit, nunc quidem in simili devotione, postea vero et in pari gloria."

[355] IV.11.2; Lombard, *Sententiae,* 2.298-9: "Item Gregorius: 'Quis fidelium habere dubium possit, in ipsa immolationis hora ad sacerdotis vocem caelos aperiri, in illo Christi mysterio angelorum choros adesse, summa et ima sociari, unum quid ex invisibilibus atque visibilibus fieri?' Idem: 'Eodem momento et in caelum rapitur ministerio angelorum consociandum corpori Christi, et ante oculos sacerdotis in altari videtur.'"

is therefore a heavenly event, a "heavenly sending," as the priest himself says when he calls on the angels to bring the offering to God's altar in heaven.[356] And most significantly for our purposes, Lombard goes so far as to repeat Augustine's statement that angelic presence and participation is necessary for a Mass to be properly and correctly celebrated.[357] Clearly, while he does not devote as much attention to consideration of this relationship, Lombard nevertheless believes it to be both vital and important.

I.5.6. Bonaventure

Like Lombard, Bonaventure customarily considered this relationship in terms of worship. But unlike Lombard, he spends more time on the subject. Bonaventure was sure that the angels were present to Christians during times of prayer, commenting that "in prayer we speak to God, hear Him, and converse with the angels as if we were living an angelic life." The angels carry those prayers to God, he preached, allowing reconciliation with the Father. But humanity could also pray to the angels, requesting either assistance or the angels' own intercessions on behalf of the faithful.[358]

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[356] IV.13.1; Ibid., 2.312-3: "Quod etiam Augustinus tradere videtur dicens: 'Recolite nomen et advertite veritatem. Missa enim dicitur eo quod caelestis missus ad consecrandum vivificum corpus adveniat, iuxta dictum sacerdotis dicentis: *Ominpotens Deus, iube haec perferri per manus sancti angeli tui in sublime altare tuum* etc."

[357] IV.13.1; Ibid., 2.313: "Idcirco nisi angelus venerit, missa nequaquam iure vocari potest."

[358] Keck, *Angels and Angelology,* 169; "Legenda Sancti Francisci," 8.539: "Tandem in oratione Deum alloquimur et audimus et quasi angelicam vitam agentes, inter Angelos conversamur…" Cf. "De Sanctis Angelis (Sermo 5)," 9.626: "Ipsi enim reconciliant nos Deo, quantum possunt. Accusatores nostri coram Deo sunt daemones; Angeli autem excusant nos, quando offerunt orationes nostras, ad quas devote faciendas nos inducunt; Apocalypsis octavo: *Ascendit fumus aromatum in conspectu Domini de manu Angeli*. Aromata ista suaviter redolentia sunt orationes Sanctorum. Vis placare Deum, quem offendisti? Ora devote. Offerunt Deo orationem tuam, ut te Deo reconcilient. Dicitur in Luca, quod Christus, *factus in agonia, prolixus orabat, et apparuit Angelus Domini, confortans eum*; et hoc totum factum est propter nos, quia non indiguit conforatione sua, sed ut ostenderetur, quod libenter assistunt devote orantibus et libenter iuvant eos et ipsos confortant et orationes eorum Deo offerunt. Et rogabimus Deum, quatenus per suffragium Angelorum ita (possimus) flere et conteri pro peccatis, ita dominicam passionem ad memoriam revocare, instanter orationi vacare, quod possimus Creatori nostro reconciliari in perpetuum, quod nobis concedat Christus."

But what was more important to the medieval angelologists was not what tasks humans could do for the angels or in order to invoke them, but what sorts of tasks humanity could participate in with the angels and perform alongside them. Most of the time, the Mass was seen as an occasion for the two sets of beings to meet and interact with one another, and the religious and lay societies alike were very cognizant of this event. So when Bonaventure (or Bernard!) would reference the Seraphim and their song, "Holy! Holy! Holy!", people's thoughts would naturally turn towards the liturgy.[359] In a sermon given on the Feast of St. Michael, Bonaventure reinforces this idea by focusing on the meaning of Psalm 137:1 ("In the sight of the angels, I sing to you" (Vulgate)).[360] Echoing the Gloss, he teaches that humanity should sing with the angels, and praise God with them as well, emphasizing the idea of human participation in the singing of the Sanctus during the Mass.[361]

On the other hand, Bonaventure was less consistent in his thoughts as to the ways in which the angels interact with the particular events that take place during Mass. In the *Breviloquium*, he does not make mention of the angels during his discussion of baptism.[362] Nevertheless, in *On How to Prepare for the Celebration of the Mass*, Bonaventure does list "association with the angels" as one of the many benefits of the Eucharist.[363] He also encourages a fellow Franciscans to prepare for worship by trying to

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[359] Ibid., 174.
[360] (Psalm 138:1) "I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise" (NRSV)
[361] Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, 181; "De Sanctis Angelis (Sermo 2)," 9.619: "Nam dicit Glossa super hunc locum: 'Quibus aequari sicut nunc laude, ita post dignitate, exspecto.' Notandum autem, quod psallere (debemus) Domino laudando ipsum in virtutibus eius, id est Angelis, propter gloriosam ipsorum *sublimationem*, propter caritativam *dilectionem*, protper sollicitam *subventionem*."
[362] Ibid., 166.
[363] Ibid., 177; "Tractatus de Praeparatione ad Missam," 8.102: "Item, *privat se omnibus talibus provenientibus ex sacra communione*, quae sunt peccatorum remissio, fomitis mitigatio, mentis illuminatio, interior refectio, Christi et corporis eius mystici incorporatio, virtutum roboratio, contra diabolum armatio, fidei certitudo, elevatio spei, excitatio caritatis, augmentatio devotionis et conversatio Angelorum."

imitate the angels and their inner peace. One can also attempt to reflect a well-ordered soul by making the "discerning selection" of not eating before administering or receiving the Eucharist. Such a soul, "pertains to the Archangels."[364] What Bonaventure was sure on, however, was that the angels serve an intermediary role in the divine economy, much like the sacraments. While the sacraments exist as a visible sign of invisible grace, the angels likewise exist as a sign of invisible grace; they are just sometimes-visible and sometimes-invisible.[365]

Furthermore, the hierarchy of the angels serves, according to Bonaventure, as a model for the organization of the church, primarily of the clergy, but including the laity as well. The ecclesial order of pope, archbishops, bishops, etc., should conform to the example of the angels, that through them "the Church is hierarchized," and provided with stability.[366] He also saw the clerical and monastic orders as falling more towards the

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[364] Ibid., 177; "Epostola de XXV Memoralibus," 8.494: "Duodecimum, ut, cum debes divinum officium celebrare, ita factus in te ipso quietus, ut obliviscaris omnium terrenorum, quatenus fixa mente caelestibus insistendo mysteriis, cum tanta illud devotione, reverentia, gaudio ac timore persolvas, quasi inter Angelorum agmina constitutus, divino conspectui laudes praesentaliter offeras cum eisdem." Cf. "Hexaëmeron," 5.442: "Secundum est discreta *praeelectio*; ex quo apparet, quid percipitur, sequitur, ut praeeligatur, ex quo percipitur bonum; quia in bonis est *electio ordinata*; non enim prius manducandum quam celebrandum. — Et hoc respondet Archangelis, et discreta *perlustratio* convenit Angelis."

[365] Ibid., 156; "Dominica III post Pentecosten (Sermo 1)," 9.369: "De isto gaudio dicitur Tobiae ultimo: *Reverentur omnes timentes Deum, et relinquent gentes idola sua et venient in Ierusalem iet inhabitabunt in ea; et gaudebnt in ea omnes reges terrae*. — *Revertentur*, per contritionem, *omntes timentes Deum*, filiali reveretia, qui aversi fuerant a Deo per peccatum; *et reliquent gentes idola sua*, vanitatum*, et venient in Ierusalem*, concorditer per pacis tranquilitatem; *et inhabitabunt in ea*, per boni operis continuationem. Et quia haec fiunt adiutorio Angelorum, qui deputati sunt ad nostram custodiam; ideo *reges terrae*, id est Angeli, qui regunt nos terrentos per dispensationem a Deo eis datam, *gaudebunt* propter accidentalis praemii augmentationem."

[366] Ibid., 43; "Hexaëmeron," 5.438: "Restat ergo dicere de *luna*. Sicut enim anima contemplativa est mulier bona, *amicta sole*, ita *luna* est *sub pedibus eius*, non ad conculcandum, sed ad stabiliendum, scilicet militans Ecclesia. Philosophi multa consideraverunt de sole aeterno, sed nihil eis valuit, quia non fuit *luna sub pedibus*. Unde sicut luna est filia solis et recipit lumen ab eo, similiter militans Ecclesia a superna Ierusalem; unde Apostolus dicit eam *matrem nostram,* quia est mater influentiarum, quibus efficimur filii Dei. Caelestis hierarchia est illustrativa militantis Ecclesiae."; Ibid., 5.434: "Et has illuminationes et conditiones primo recipiunt mentes hierarchiae per gloriam, ut Angeli et animae beatae, quia ille sol primo illuminat illos et per illos nos; quia ordo est, ut illustratio fiat primo eorum quae sunt sibi similiora et propinquiora; unde et locus supremus datus est eis. Illi autem, qui rebelles sunt his luminibus, corruerunt. Et ex eo, quod Angeli primo recipiunt illuminationem a sole primo, inde recipiunt configurationem

'contemplative' side of the active/contemplative lifestyle dichotomy. Thus, he could argue that the clergy reflect the angelic life, which he envisioned as being an existence focused on spiritual and intellectual matters — an existence into which the laity would also enter upon death. Thus, the task of the clergy is to likewise address such matters on earth, intermingling the active and contemplative life while administering the sacraments, the laity, and the church itself.[367]

I.5.7. Thomas Aquinas

Speaking frankly, a discussion of Aquinas's understanding of the relationship of the angels to the church is difficult to have. One major reason is that Thomas himself never wrote a treatise that dealt with the church specifically, removed from all other theological considerations.[368] Another is that the secondary literature that deals with Thomas's conception of the church does so nearly universally in terms of the church's human members alone.[369] Nevertheless, we can find some places in the *Summa Theologiae* where Aquinas touches on this issue, and can briefly discuss them here.[370]

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deiformem et hierarchizationem et sacrum obtinent principatum, et per illos hierarchizatur Ecclesia." Cf. "De Sanctis Angelis (Sermo 1)," 9.613.

[367] Ibid., 151; "Hexaëmeron," 5.440: "Secundus ordo est *clericalis,* activus et contemplativus, qui et *pascere* debet et *contemplari,* ut sint medii inter Deum et plebem. *Omnis enim pontifex ex hominibus assumtus pro hominibus constituitur in iis quae sunt ad Deum, ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis.* Et hi sunt tres ordines: *ministerialis, sacerdotalis, pontificalis*. Ad hos reducuntur omnes, quia omnes aut sunt *ministrantes,* et sunt primi sex; aut sunt *sanctificantes* per verba; aut sunt *regentes* per eminentiam."

[368] George Sabra, *Thomas Aquinas' Vision of the Church: Fudamentals of an Ecumenical Ecclesiology* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1987), 19.

[369] Cf. Coleman O'Neill, "St. Thomas on Membership of the Church," *The Thomist* 27 (1963: Apr./July/Oct.), 88-140. When speaking of the "heavenly church," O'Neill does so only in terms of the Church Militant and Triumphant, mentioning Principalities and Powers only in passing, on page 92. Even more interesting is that when he expansively discusses the same Questions that we do — such as III.8 on page 109 and following, and III.80 on page 112 and following — he does not touch on the Articles that explicitly deal with the angels, completely leaving them out of the discussion.

[370] Sabra mentions these examples in a footnote, but does not go into any detailed discussion of them, in Sabra, *Aquinas' Vision,* 67.

In *Summa Theologiae* III.8.4,[371] Aquinas is dealing with the question of how Christ can be said to be the "head" of the angels. He cites three objections: 1) A head must be of the same nature as its members, yet Christ became human, not angel; 2) Since the Church is a *congregatio fidelium*, and the angels have no faith, angels cannot be members. Thomas is relying on II Corinthians 5:6-7 here, which states that humanity "walks by faith, and not by sight."[372] The angels, says Thomas, have the proper sight and thus do not need faith;[373] 3) similar to the first objection, given that the Word quickens souls (according to Augustine), the Word made flesh quickens bodies — which the angels do not have. Thus, Christ does not give them life.[374] The contrary position Aquinas puts forward is that Paul, in Colossians 2:10,[375] names Christ as the head of "all Principality and Power." If that characterization is true, he reasons, then the same should be true for the other orders of angels[376] — perhaps not the most convincing of counterpositions.

But, of course, it is in Aquinas's own answer that we come to the heart of his reasoning. He begins by asserting that one body must have one head, but that that one body may be made up of a multitude of individual parts — so long as those parts are all oriented towards the same end. Both angels and humanity have the same end, "the glory

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[371] III.8.4; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 49.64: "Caput enim et membra sunt unius naturae. Sed Christus, secundum quod homo, non est conformis in natura cum angelis, sed solum cum hominibus … Ergo Christus, secundum quod homo, non est caput angelorum."

[372] "So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight." (NRSV)

[373] III.8.4; Ibid.: "Praeterea, illorum Christus est caput, qui pertinent ad Ecclesiam, *quae est corpus eius,* ut dicitur *Ephes*. Sed angeli non pertinent ad Ecclesiam, nam Ecclesia est congregatio fidelium; fides autem not est in angelis; non enim *ambulant per fidem*, sed *per speciem*; alioquin perergrinarentur a Domino, secundum quod Apostolus argumentatur II *Cor*. Ergo Christus, secundum quod homo, non est caput angelorum."

[374] III.8.4; Ibid., 49.66: "Praeterea, Agustinus dicit, *Super Joannem*, quod, sicut *Verbum quod erat in principio apud Patrem*, vivificat animas, ita *Verbum caro factum* vivificat corpora, quibus angeli carent. Sed *Verbum caro factum* est Christus secundum quod homo. Ergo Christus, secundum quod homo, non influit vitem angelis. Et ite, secundum quod homo, non est caput angelorum."

[375] "And you have come to fullness in [Jesus Christ], who is the head of every ruler and authority." (NRSV)

[376] III.8.4; Ibid.: "Sed contra est quod Apostolus dicit, *Coloss., Qui est caput omnis Principatus et Potestatis*. Et eadem ratio est de angelis aliorum ordinum. Ergo Christus est caput angelorum."

of the Divine fruition." Therefore, the "mystical body of the Church" contains both angels and humans as members.[377] Pointing towards Ephesians 1:20-22,[378] Aquinas concludes that both angels and humans enjoy God's gifts and influence through Christ as head.[379]

Nevertheless, humanity and the angels as they exist within the church are different, mostly in terms of how each interact with the sacrament of the Eucharist. In III.80.2, Aquinas is considering the question of whether it is only humanity that eats the Eucharist spiritually. He again raises 3 objections: 1) From Psalm [78]:25,[380] we learn that humanity has eaten angelic food, which the Gloss says is the body of Christ. But the angels would only be capable of eating it were it spiritual food;[381] 2) Augustine states that the Eucharist designates the members of Christ's body, which is comprised of both angels and humans;[382] 3) Furthermore, Augustine also writes that Christ must be eaten spiritually, and that consequently He lives in those who do so and they in him. But we

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[377] And as Sabra points out, these terms — *congregatio fidelium* and *corpus mysticum* — are Aquinas's preferred terms for the church. Sabra, *Aquinas' Vision*, 69.

[378] "God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church …" (NRSV)

[379] III.8.4; Ibid.: "Dicendum quod, sicut dictum est, ubi est unum corpus, necesse est ponere unum caput. Unum autem corpus similitudinare dicitur una multitudo ordinata in unum secundum distinctos actus sive officia. Manifestum est autem quod ad unum finem, qui est gloria divinae fruitionis, ordinantur et homines et angeli. Unde corpus Ecclesiae mysticum non solum consistit ex hominibus sed etiam ex angelis. Totius autem hujus multitudinis Christus est caput: quia propinquius se habet ad Deum et perfectius participat dona ipsius, non solum quam homines, sed etiam quam angeli; et de ejus influentia non solum homines recipiunt, sed etiam angeli. Dicitur enim *Ephes.*, quod *constituit eum*, scilicet Christum, Deus Pater *ad dexteram suam in caelestibus supra omnem Principatum et Potestatem et Virtutem et Dominationem en omne nomen quod nominatur non solum in hoc saeculo sed etiam in futuro; et omnia subjecit sub pedibus ejus.* Et ideo Christus non solum est caput hominum sed etiam angelorum. Unde *Matt.* legitur quod *acceserunt angel et ministrabant ei*."

[380] "Mortals ate of the bread of angels; he sent them food in abundance." (NRSV)

[381] III.80.2; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 59.34: "Videtur quod non solius hominis sit hoc sacramentum spiritualiter sumere, sed etiam angelorum, quia super illud *Psalmi, Panem angelorum manducavit homo*, dicit Glossa, *idest corpus Christi, qui est vere cibus angelorum*. Sed hoc non esset, si angeli spiritualiter Christum non manducarent. Ergo angeli spiritualiter Christum manducant."

[382] III.80.2; Ibid., 34 & 36: "Praeterea, Augustinus dicit, *Hunc cibum et potum societatem vult intelligi corporis et membrorum suorum, quod est in Ecclesia in praedestinatis.* Sed ad istam societatem non solum pertinent homines, sed etiam sancti angeli. Ergo etiam sancti angeli spiritualiter manducant."

know that Christ lives in both angels and humans — and thus, angels can and do eat the Eucharist spiritually.[383] And yet, Augustine also argues — at least, as Aquinas is using him here — that one must approach the altar in order to partake. The angels do not approach the altar so that they may receive, however, meaning that they do not receive the sacrament spiritually.[384]

The answer for Aquinas is to point out that while Christ is contained in the sacrament, it is through the sacramental species, not His own proper species. Thus Christ may actually be 'eaten' in two ways — through His proper species and through His sacramental species. Then angels ingest Christ in the former manner, since they are united to him in perfect charity and perfect clarity of vision, rather than through faith. Humanity ingests Christ the latter way, since we are untied to Christ only through faith. The angels, therefore, have no need to participate in the Eucharist in the same way that humanity does.[385] Rather, Aquinas says in his reply to the first objection, the angels eat the Eucharist first and more perfectly, since they do so through His proper species. Humanity subsequently derives our Eucharist from that heavenly one, receiving it

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[383] III.80.2; Ibid., 36: "Praeterea, Augustinus dicit, *Spiritualiter manducanus est Christus, quoniam ipse dicit, Qui manducat meam carnem, et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in eo.* Sed hoc convenit non solum hominibus, sed etiam sanctis angelis, in quibus per caritatem est Christus, et ipsi in eo. Ergo videtur quod spiritualiter manducare non solum sit hominum, sed etiam angelorum."

[384] III.80.2; Ibid.: "Sed contra est quod Augustinus dicit, *Panem de altari spiritualiter manducate; innocentiam ad altare apportate*. Sed angelorum non est accedere ad altare tanquam aliquid sint inde sumpturi. Ergo angelorum non est spiritualiter manducare."

[385] III.80.2; Ibid.: "Dicendum quod in hoc sacramento continetur ipse Christus, non quidem in specie propria, sed in specie sacramenti. Dupliciter ergo contingit manducare spiritualiter ipsum Christum. Uno modo prout in sua specie consistit; et hoc modo angeli manducant spiritualiter ipsum Christum inquantum ei uniuntur fruitione caritatis perfectae, et visione manifesta (quem panem expectamus in patria), non per fidem sicut nos ei hic unimur. Alio modo contingit spiritualiter manducare Christum, prout est sub speciebus hujus sacramenti, inquantum scilicet aliquis credit in Christum cum desiderio sumendi hoc sacramentum. Et hoc non solum est spiritualiter manducare Christum, sed etiam spiritualiter manducare hoc sacramentum; quod non competit angelis. Et ideo licet angeli spiritualiter manducent Christum, non tamen convenit eis spiritualiter manducare hoc sacramentum."

through the sacramental species.[386] Despite the different manner in which they do so, both angels and humans share in the same exact Eucharist.

I.5.8. Gabriel Biel

As did those who came before him, Biel explores the relationship between angels and the church in his discussion of the sacrament of Baptism. Again following Aquinas, Biel presents baptism as the foremost of the sacraments, since without it, no human is eligible for salvation. Thus, each member of humanity is capable of serving as a minister of baptism. However, the complete truth is that any rational creature — be it angel or demon — is capable of doing so as well, though the conditions for such an unusual occurrence are no doubt unusual themselves. Following Aquinas, Biel argues that the possibility exists that God might choose to bestow that power on any creature He so determines, regardless of what type of being that creature may be, in the same way that God's salvific power is not strictly limited to the sacraments themselves.[387]

Even so, Biel writes that baptism is ordinarily administered by humans, for the same reasons maintained by Aquinas. In the same way that Christ was human, so too should the baptismal ministers share in that similarity of nature. Likewise, baptism is an act that necessarily excludes both angels and demons, since it takes place in the context of the church on earth, the Church militant.[388]

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[386] III.80.2; Ibid.: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod sumptio Christi sub hoc sacramento ordinatur, sicut ad finem, ad fruitionem patriae, eo modo quo angeli eo fruuntur. Et quia ea quae sunt ad finem derivantur a fine, inde est quod ista manducatio Christi qua eum suminus sub sacramento quodammodo derivatur ab illa manducatione qua angeli fruuntur Christo in patria. Et ideo dicitur *homo manducare panem angelorum*, quia primo et principaliter est angelorum, qui eo fruuntur in specie propria; secundario autem est hominum, qui Christum sub sacramento accipiunt."
[387] Farthing, "Post Thomam," 217-8.
[388] Ibid., 218.

On the other hand, Biel composes an engaging metaphor to express the manner in which he believes that the celebration of the Eucharist is one place during the Mass where humans and the angels meet. Similar to Aquinas,[389] he makes the distinction that while both parties participate, they do so differently. Christ, he writes, is the bread of the angels, which has become the hay for the flock of humanity. The blessed angels eat this bread, born of the Word, in heaven, while holy men and women eat the same hay on earth.[390]

More significant, however, is the way in which humanity participates in the singing of the Sanctus. At this point in the Mass, says Biel, they join the angels in "praising," "adoring," and "trembling": giving testimony to God's majesty, showing reverence to the same, and tremble at the mastery of God and their own desire to serve — trembling not out of fear, but out of wonder.[391] As the angels offer their uninterrupted song, humanity adds its own, wishing to be included in the angelic chorus — not due to any inherent worth on the part of the song itself, but due to the humble devotion with which it is offered. Thus, the Sanctus is actually a song that is both angelic and human.[392] Biel is clear that the angels share in the worship of God by humanity — or, perhaps more accurately, that humanity participates in the angels' own worship of God.

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[389] As seen above in our discussion of *Summa Theologiae* III.80.2.
[390] Biel, *Expositio*, 1.6: "Panis enim angelorum factus est fenum, unicus patris, filius hominis, verbum quippe caro factum est. Et iuxta prophetam: *Omnis caro fenum*. Comedunt igitur angeli verbum de deo natum, comedunt homines verbum fenum factum, pane suo vivunt angeli in celis, et beati sunt. Feno suo vivunt homines in terris et sancti sunt."
[391] Ibid., 1.153: "'Laudant', inquam, virtuti maiestatis testimonium exhibendo, 'Adorant' excellentiam maiestatis reverendo, 'Tremunt' potentiam maiestatis administrando sive eidem famulando. Tremere enim dicuntur, non metu formidinis cum sint perfecte beati sed admirationis conceptu et obediente famulatu."
[392] Ibid., 1.162: "… cupientes nostra vota laudibus connumerari angelicis, angelicum hymnum pariter concinnimus non propria presumptione, sed humili devotione et supplici dicentes: *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus dominus deus sabaoth*. Hic itaque hymnus vox est angelorum et hominum."

I.6. To Close

As we can see from our exploration of the angelological tradition from which Luther drew, angels have been an important part of the life of the Christian church on multiple levels, both intellectually and devotionally. And yet, the aspects of angelology upon which each theologian focused has shifted over the course of history.

Keeping in mind our four basic questions, we see that for our theologians of the early Church, understanding *what* angels are was much less important than understanding *who* angels are. Certainly, each man did align himself with tradition by treating angels as spiritual beings. But Augustine tended to ignore the nature of angels as something that could never be truly understood by humanity. Chrysostom only made off-hand remarks regarding the angelic nature, while Bernard limited himself to only that which he could support through his exegesis. Even Pseudo-Dionysius, despite his extensive work on angels as mediators of illumination, did not say much more on the subject than to claim that the nature of their hierarchical existence necessitates that they be spiritual beings. Instead, these men wrote extensively on angelic relationships. The interactions between humanity and the angels fundamentally supports the entirety of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei,* while Chrysostom constantly urged his followers to emulate the angels as much as possible, that true union between them could be fulfilled. Bernard spoke to his followers of the ways in which the angels bring humanity to God, both by carrying their prayers to God and by sharing in the Church with us, as equal members. And Pseudo-Dionysius's entire angelology is founded on his need to explain the hierarchy of angelic relationship, how the angels exist in an eternal state of mediation and illumination between themselves, with God, and with humanity. In a sense, for all of these authors,

understanding the nature of angels flows from understanding the nature of their relationships.

The angelology of our theologians from the medieval period reflect a different set of concerns. The influx of Aristotelian philosophy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had enormous impact on the way theology as an academic discipline was practiced, particularly on how philosophy and theology could be understood to relate to each other. Naturally, angels fell right into the middle of this dilemma, coming to serve for theologians as a balance and meeting point between the natural and supernatural worlds[393] — even to the point of becoming simply "thought experiments," in which angels served as vehicles for discussion of the true subject in which a theologian or philosopher might be interested, such as cognition, communication, etc.[394] Thus, we can see from our examination of these medieval angelologies that these theologians were much more intensely focused on questions of *what,* rather than *who,* in their attempts to come to an understanding of how such beings — whose existence was known and proven by faith — could likewise be said to exist according to these men's own experience and knowledge of the world. Beginning with Lombard, who drew from tradition to lay some basic foundation, Bonaventure and (especially) Aquinas dissected and clarified the intricacies and complexities of angelic existence, formulating the conclusions and positions which Biel faithfully echoed. For them, the universe could be perfect only if these beings of pure spirit exist, and only from this spiritual existence could the way in which angels relate to the rest of creation be explained. For medieval angelology,

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[393] Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz, introduction to *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance*, edited by Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz (Hampshire, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 2-3.

[394] Dominik Perler, "Thought Experiments: The Methodological Function of Angels in Late Medieval Epistomology," in *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance*, edited by Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz (Hampshire, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 144ff.

questions of *who* could only be answered by first answering questions of *what* — angelic relationships could only arise in a manner dictated by angelic nature.

Thus, we may now turn our attention to Martin Luther, whose attempts to answer questions of *what* and *who* will be the subject of the next three chapters of our study.

"Here you see what great and gracious friends we have in them, that they favor us no less than themselves; rejoice in our welfare quite as much as they do in their own, so much so that in this song they give us a most comforting inducement to regard them as the best of friends. In this way, you rightly understand the angels, not according to their being, which the masters of art attempt fearlessly to portray, but according to their inner heart, spirit and sense, that through I know not what they are, I know what their chief desire and constant work is; by this you look into their heart."[1]

Chapter II: *Das Wesen:* The Nature of the Angels

Having set the scene with as thorough a discussion of the angelology of the patristic and medieval periods as possible, I now ask you to turn your attention to the angelology of our main character — Martin Luther. In this first of three chapters dealing with his thought, we will be focusing on what I have chosen to call the *Wesen* of the angels: their being, their nature; answering questions that have to deal with what Luther taught were the essential and innate qualities and characteristics of the angels. Scholarship has paid little attention to this topic, even in those few articles and books who address Luther's angelology at all. Among our main interlocutors, only Janz addresses the issue of defining angelic being or nature, sharing one of Luther's *Table Talk* comments that defines angels as, "a spiritual creature, a personal being without a body, appointed for the service of the heavenly church."[2] As a short summary of Luther's position, this statement serves well. However, as we will see, Luther understood the angelic nature to be far more complex than any one simple, definitional statement could encompass.

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[1] Church Postils 1.158-9; WA 10.I.1.93: "Hie sihestu, wie gunstig, große frund sie unß seyn, das sie nitt weniger unß gonnen, denn yhn selbs, frewen sich auch unßers heylß ßo fast, alß yhreß eygens, das sie furwar ynn dißem gesang unß eyn trostlich reytzung geben des besten tzu yhn tzuuorsehen, alß tzu den bestenn frunden. Sihe, das ist recht die Engel nit nach yhrem weßen, damit die Naturlich meyster on alle frucht umbgahn, ßondernn nach yhrem inwendigsten hertz, mut und sin vorstanden, das ich nit weiß, was sie seyen, ßondern was yhr hochstis begird unnd stettigis werck ist, da sihet man yhn ynß hertz."
[2] Janz, "Angels," 5; WATR 5.552.#6229: "Angelus est substantia creata spiritualis, quae est persona sine corpore, destinata ad ministeria coelestis ecclesiae."

And so, as explained in the Introduction, I have divided his thoughts up into three separate chronological sections: Pre-1526, 1526-1535, and 1536-1545. Even so, within these sections, rather than follow a strict listing of his comments according to when they were made, I combine them into a more cohesive whole, noting dating only when necessary — such as when Luther shows variation regarding a particular point. For the most part, however, what emerges is a consistent picture of the angels in each of these three periods in Luther's life.

Strictly speaking, this section illustrates the complexity of Luther's thought by considering more than just angelic being itself. He pondered all manner of questions of angelic existence — are they spiritual or physical? Do they have bodies, whether like ours or not? — but he also wondered about what their speech was like, what the extent of their power or strength might be, and how their minds work. Therefore, we will deal with such questions in this section as well.

II.1. Pre-1526

Even a cursory glance at a timeline of Luther's life would reveal this period as perhaps the most chaotic. Where I to give it a title, I would choose: "Crisis of Reform," because his life was consumed by the decisions and events that lead to his break with the Catholic and his emergence on the political and theological stage. He became a friar in 1505, was ordained in 1507, and received his doctorate in 1512. The posting of the Ninety-Five thesis is said to have occurred in 1517, with *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* being published in 1520. Following the Diet of Worms and his excommunication in 1521, Luther abandons his religious habit in 1524. At the end of this period, we find Luther publishing works on the relationship between the spiritual and secular realms —

especially during and in response to the Peasant's War of 1524-5. And in June 1525, Luther marries Katharina von Bora — but he also broke with Erasmus and mourned the loss of his most powerful and steadfast patron, Elector Frederick. As Haile puts it, "If aging is to be understood as our accumulation of injuries, then Martin Luther aged considerably during the emotional traumas of the year 1525."[3]

Thus, in this period, much as we see Luther slowly, reluctantly separating himself from the Catholic church, we also find that his angelology remains firmly founded in his religious training. And so, we begin by exploring what sort of beings Luther believed the angels to be.

II.1.1. Angelic Characteristics

One point that he makes in this period is that the angels were definitely created, not 'begotten.' Only the Son has been begotten by God.[4] He also notes that (according to Augustine, at least) the angels have bodies.[5] Nevertheless, Luther cautiously refuses to define what sort of bodies the angels have. Thus, he preaches that the angels are not visible, in the way that humanity understands visibility, but in a way that the heavens are visible, like the realization of the coming of a exciting event.[6] Though the angels, particularly the Cherubim, are always envisioned as having two wings,[7] what sort of

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[3] H.G. Haile, *Luther: An Experiment in Biography* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1980), 151.
[4] Church Postils 6.184; "Die Epistell der hohen messen am Christag auß Heb. prima." WA 10.I.1.166: "… die Engel hatt er auch geschaffen unnd nit geporn. Aber dißen ßon schafft er nit, ßondernn on alle mittel durch sich selbs gepiert er yhn und spricht: Ich, ich selb, durch mich selb hab dich hewte gepornn, wilchs er tzu keynen mehr gesagt hatt."
[5] "Luthers Randbemerkungen zu Augustins Schriften de trinitate und de civitate dei." WA 9.18: "Videtur hic loqui quasi angeli habeant corpora."
[6] "EVANGELIVM DOMINICAE SECVNDAE ADVENTVS DOMINI. LVCAE XXI." WA 7.489: "… at angeli visibiles non sunt, quare coelos hos visibiles intelligimus, quorum commotio qualis futura sit, experientia cognoscetur."
[7] "SCHOLAE: PSALMUS CIII. [CIV.]" WA 4.176: "Unde et Angeli pinguntur et finguntur duabus alis et Cherubin similiter."

wings, is theirs to know — and that should be sufficient for us.[8] And in his early sermon series (1523/4) on Genesis, he remarks that while the name 'cherub' is generally unknown in his day, theologians honor it as designating one of the nine heavenly choirs of angels.[9] He goes on to say that they must also have wings as do birds, as the artists portray them. But as to their faces, he has no idea what they may actually look like.[10] But the largest statement Luther makes on the characteristics and qualities of the angelic being in itself comes from his 1522 Christmas Day sermon:

> From [the Gloria] we may learn what kind of creatures the angels are. Don't consider what the great masters of art dream about them, here they are all painted in such a manner that their heart and their own thoughts may be recognized. In the first place, in that they joyfully sing, ascribing the glory to God, they show how full of his light and fire they are, not praising themselves, but recognizing that all things belong to God alone, so that with great earnestness they ascribe the glory to him whom it belongs. Therefore if you would think of a humble, pure, obedient and joyful heart, praising God, think of the angels. This is their first step, that by which they serve God. The second is their love to us as has been shown. Here you see what great and gracious friends we have in them, that they favor us no less than themselves; rejoice in our welfare quite as much as they do in their own, so much so that in this song they give us a most comforting inducement to regard them as the best of friends. In this way, you rightly understand the angels, not according to their being, which the masters of art attempt fearlessly to portray, but according to their inner heart, spirit and sense, that though I know not what they are, I know what their chief desire and constant work is; by this you look into their heart.[11]

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[8] "SCHOLAE: PSALMUS CIII. [CIV.]" WA 4.176: "Penne eorum quales? Ipsi sciunt. Nobis satis est nostras dixisse."

[9] "In Genesin Mosi librum sanctissimum. D. Martini Lutheri Declamationes." WA 24.119: "'Cherub' was fur ein thier heisse, ist noch heutigs tags unbewust, Aber bisher ists dafuer gehalten von unsern hohen schulen, das es sey der neun Choer der Engel ym hymel einer."

[10] "In Genesin Mosi librum sanctissimum. D. Martini Lutheri Declamationes." WA 24.120: "Daraus es klar ist, das die Cherub muessen fluegel haben wie die vogel, Was sie aber fur angesicht haben, weys ich nicht. Daruemb haben sie gemeynet, es sind Engel wie sie auch die maler mit fluegeln malen nach diesem wort."

[11] Church Postils 1.158-9; "Das Euangelium ynn der Christmeß. Luce. ij." WA 10.I.1.92-3: "Auß dißem gesang mogen wyr lernen, was die Engel fur Creatur seyn; laß faren, was die naturliche meyster dauon trewmen, hie sind sie also abgemalet, das sie nit baß mugen abgemalet werden, das auch yhr hertz und gedancken hie erkennet werdenn. Zum ersten ynn dem, das sie mit frewden gott die ehre tzusingen, tzeygen sie an, wie sie voll liecht und fewr sind. Erkennen, wie alle ding gottis allein sind, geben ihn selbs nichts, mit grosser brunst tragen sie die ehre alleyn dem tzu, des sie ist. Drumb wie du woltist dencken von eynem demutigen, reynen, gehorßamen, gottlobenden und frolichem hertzen ynn got, ßo denck von den Engellenn, und das ist das erst, damit sie gegen gott wandellnn. Das ander ist die liebe gegen unß, gleych wie wyr

In this quotation, we see that for Luther, knowledge of the particularities of the angels' existence is far less important than knowing and understanding the angels as gracious, loving, obedient beings.

II.1.2. Knowledge, Speech, and Power

In this period of his life, Luther shares another concern in common with the prior tradition — the manner by which angels come to know things, particularly God. Still, he does not spend much time discussing angelic knowledge. In a sermon on I Corinthians 13, he teaches that what humanity sees of God is imperfect, because the content of such vision comes through faith. Wonderful though faith is, all it does is enable the believer to receive the Word, through preaching and the imperfect prophecy Paul describes. Angels, however, see and experience God perfectly.[12] We have here an example of a method that Luther often uses when discussing the particularities of the angels: comparing and contrasting them with humanity — which we will see more of, particularly in Chapter 5. The point he makes here is that the angels are capable of knowing God in God's entirety. But while they may know God 'perfectly,' they do not share in the same knowledge as God possesses. In a scholia on Psalm 104:3,[13] Luther makes the distinction between the manner in which God knows things and the way that one angel knows another angel. In

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droben geleret seyn tzu thun. Hie sihestu, wie gunstig, große frund sie unß seyn, das sie nitt weniger unß gonnen, denn yhn selbs, frewen sich auch unßers heylß ßo fast, alß yhreß eygens, das sie furwar ynn dißem gesang unß eyn trostlich reytzung geben des besten tzu yhn tzuuorsehen, alß tzu den bestenn frunden. Sihe, das ist recht die Engel nit nach yhrem weßen, damit die Naturlich meyster on alle frucht umbgahn, ßondernn nach yhrem inwendigsten hertz, mut und sin vorstanden, das ich nit weiß, was sie seyen, ßondern was yhr hochstis begird unnd stettigis werck ist, da sihet man yhn ynß hertz."

[12] Church Postils 7.129; WA 17.II.170: "Darumb spricht er 'Unser wissen (das ist das wissen ynn diesem leben) ist stuckwerg', das ist, unvolkomen. Denn es steht ym glauben und nicht ynn sehen. 'Und unser weyssagen ist auch stuckwerg', das ist, unvolkomen. Denn es steht ym wort und predigen, wie wol beyde erkentnis und weyssagen nicht weniger noch geringer ding zeygen, denn die Engel sehen, nemlich den selbigen Gott. 'Wenn aber das volkomene komen wird, so wird das stuckwerg auffhoeren.'"

[13] "you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind…" (NRSV)

comparison with God, the angels are shadowed, and must rely on 'reflected light' in order to know other creatures.[14]

Luther also formulates teachings during this period regarding the nature of angelic speech and the extent of angelic power, though he still does not say much. Thus, he preaches that the angels carry the "pure speech of Scripture."[15] In the same sermon on I Corinthians 13, Luther also writes that Paul's premise — that one could actually speak with the 'tongues of angels' — is clearly impossible, an impossibility that Paul is exploiting. While angels can speak, they do so in human speech. But humanity may never speak in angelic speech.[16]

Concerning angelic power, Luther himself states that he would rather have a single angel than all of the violence and power that 24 Turkish chieftains with 100,000 soldiers could muster — against that single angel, they would be as nothing.[17] Nevertheless, the angels do have some limitations on their power. Miracles performed by the angels come from God's strength and power alone, says Luther, agreeing with Augustine while commenting on Psalm 72.[18]

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[14] "SCHOLAE: PSALMUS CIII. [CIV.]" WA 4.175-6: "… angeli sunt nubes respectu dei. Quia tantum differt cognitio, qua angelus deum in altero angelo cognoscit, et cognitio, qua deum facie ad faciem cognoscit, quantum differt cognitio solis in nube opposita et qua in propria claritate, cum creatura non sit pura lux, sed potius lucida a luce."

[15] "Predigt am Ostersonntag Nachmittag. (27. März)" WA 15.521: "Sic de angelis fere, i. e. angelus **furet die lauter reyne schrifft."**

[16] Church Postils 7.123-4; WA 17.II.165: "Denn freylich das erste stuck auch unmüglich ist, da er spricht 'Wenn ich mit engel zungen redete.' Syntemal es nicht müglich ist eym menschen mit engel zungen reden, sonderlich weyl er hie menschen zungen und engel zungen unterscheydet. Ja, die engel keyne zungen haben, sondern sie, die engel reden wol mit menschen zungen."

[17] "Dominica Exaudi." WA 16.273: "Ich selbs wolte lieber einen Engel umb mich haben denn vier und zwentzig Tuerckische Keiser mit aller irer macht und gewalt, wenn sie gleich hundertmal tausent Buechsen bey sich hetten, so ists doch alles gegen einem Engel gar nichts."

[18] "GLOSSA: PSALMUS LXXI. [LXXII.]" WA 3.461: "angeli non faciunt soli sed in Deo et ex Deo: q. d. sua miracula ex propria virtute faciet et facit …"

II.1.3. Ontological Concerns

Given how impressive and powerful he believed the angels to be, Luther works hard to make sure his followers know how to treat the angels with the proper level of reverence and respect. Especially in his sermons, he makes clear the way the angels — who are creatures in the same way that humans are — occupy an ontological midpoint between God (especially as the Incarnate Son) and humanity. And so, as a lesson about the angels themselves, Luther wants to make clear to his listeners that angels are never spoken of in scripture in such a way that they might be understood to be children of God in the same manner as the Son. Thus he is able to describe them as:

> … Simply appointed messengers sent forth of God into the world. Although to them he has committed much, he does not constitute any among them Lord; they are characterized as wind and a flame of fire. He terms them ‘ spirits,’ ‘winds,’ and ‘a flame of fire’ because in such form do they execute his bidding, moving with the ease and swiftness of the wind, and having the brilliance of lightning or a flame of fire, as much Scriptural evidence testifies.[19]

Given that He is called the Son, Jesus Christ must therefore be superior to the angels.[20] Still, “He cannot be superior to angels without being true God, for angels are the highest

[19] Church Postils 6.189-90; “Die Epistell der hohen messen am Christag auß Heb. prima.” WA 10.I.1.174: “Damit will er, das die Engel nit solch namen haben ynn der schrifft, das tzu yhr eynem were gesagt: du bist meyn ßon. Er soll meyn ßon seyn, yhn sollen anbeten alle Engele, ßondernn er macht sie nur zu botten, die er außsendet ynn die welt, und ist die meynung: Wenn er den Engelln viel befihlet, ßo ists nit, das er yhr eynen tzum solchem herrnn setze, ßondernn macht, das sie seyen wind unnd fewrflammen. Er nennet sie wind odder geyster unnd fewrflammen darumb, das, wenn sie gesand werden, nehmen sie solch form an, fliegen leicht und schwindt wie der wind und leuchten wie der blix und flammen, alß das ynn der schrifft an vielen ortten beweyst wirt.”

[20] Church Postils 6.247; “Am Sontag nach dem Christag, Epistell Gal. iij.” WA 10.I.1.355: “Und ßo er ßon ist, ßo ist er mehr den Engel; ist er denn mehr den mensch unnd Engel, das die hohist creatur sind, ßo muß er warer gott seyn. Denn gottis ßon seyn ist mehr denn Engel seyn, wie ynn der Epistell am Christag gesagt ist.”

order of beings."[21] The angels are even higher than the greatest saints, such as Augustine or Jerome — or even Peter and Paul.[22]

One of the further difficulties during this period that Luther faces regarding the angels is the ontological tension between the angelic nature and the angelic office; in other words, to what extent is the actuality of the angelic office dependent on the angelic nature and vice versa? Luther deals with this question at some length in his *Lectures on Hebrews* (as we will see in a moment), but in other works as well, he repeatedly connects the angels with the idea of being God's 'mouth,' such as in one of his Christmas sermons, given in 1522. However, such a characterization, he says, is a better description of the work that the angel does rather than of the angelic existence itself.[23] Likewise, in 1523, he characterizes an angel as a "mundpot," or 'mouth-messenger,'[24] who brings God's Word rather than its own. The evil angels, however, have deserted this office by choosing their own, choosing to serve the devil. They no longer have the office, since they no longer preach God, but retain the name nonetheless.[25] So while the term 'angel' does designate their office according to Luther, it also designates something more intrinsic to the angelic nature, something that the evil angels possess despite their turn away from

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[21] Church Postils 6.184; "Die Epistell der hohen messen am Christag auß Heb. prima." WA 10.I.1.166: "Das er aber got sey, obwol ander heyligen auch gotter und gottis kinder genennet werdenn, beweyßet der Apostel starck gnug damit, das tzu keynem Engel, schweyg denn eynem menschen, ynn ßonderheytt gesagt sey: du bist meyn ßon; drumb muß das eyn ßonderlicher ßon seyn, ubir alle menschen unnd engel; denn weyl er yhn nit ynn gemeyn mit andernn eynen ßon nennet, ßondernn tzeucht yhn auß allen, muß er hoher seyn denn keyn ander. Nu mag er nit hoher seyn denn die Engel, er sey denn gott warhafftig, weyl die engel das hohist sind."

[22] Church Postils 4.238; "Predigt am 8. Sonntage nach Trinitatis." WA 10.III.260: "So saget aber got (es sag Augu: oder Gabriel von hymel, Peter oder Paul, das ist noch wol mer)…"

[23] "Das Euangelium ynn der Christmeß. Luce. ij." WA 10.I.1.85: "Angelus **aber heyst eyn bote, und Lucas nennet yhn hie** Angelus domini, **gottis bote. Es ligt auch mehr an der botschafft, denn an seynem leben …**"

[24] "Die Stephani Lutheri sermo." WA 11.222: "Dicitur nuncius 'Angelus', **heist ein mundpot.**"

[25] "Die ander Epistel Sanct Petri und eine S. Judas gepredigt und ausgelegt." WA 14.45: "… ipsi angeli deberent esse. 'Angelus' enim nomen officii est, quia non suum verbum et nuntium, sed dei afferunt, quid autem faciunt? sicut priores angeli desciverunt a suo officio et elegerunt proprium. Ita diabolus princeps mundi dicitur. Ita officium non habent, quia verbum dei non praedicant, sed nomen habent, sicut angeli mali dicuntur angeli."

God. Still, regarding the seeming confusion and tension between angelic nature v. angelic office, he is much clearer in his *Lectures on Hebrews*, to which we now turn.

II.1.4. *Lectures on Hebrews*

From April 1517 to March 1518, Luther lectured on the book of Hebrews, twice a week, delivering both glosses and scholia. Unfortunately, these scholia do not seem to have existed in full manuscript form, but as extensive notes, from which he lectured — and which have yet to be found. Instead, scholarship has had to rely on manuscripts of student notes that yet survive. But as Jaroslav Pelikan puts it, "… it remains abundantly clear that both in its form and in its content this material comes from the man who, during the very months that he was lecturing on Hebrews, was also achieving notoriety as the author of the Ninety-five Theses."[26]

Early in his lectures, in his treatment of verse 1:7, Luther discusses angels and the nature of their being. He begins by stating that, in regards to this verse, he disagrees with Lombard and the similar conclusions held by those who followed him.[27] Their collective opinion was that the verse actually describes what the angels do, not what they are, and

[26] LW 29.xi-ii.

[27] Luther does not name any of the particular followers of Lombard with whom he disagrees. As to Lombard, however, Luther is likely thinking of his Commentary on Hebrews: "Spiritus autem sunt angeli, nec eo spiritus sunt quo angeli, cum mittuntur, fiunt angeli. Angelus enim officii nomen est non naturae: nomen naturae spiritus est: ex eo quod est, spiritus est; ex eo quod agit, angelus est: sic nomen naturae est homo, nomen officii miles. Homo ergo fit miles, non miles homo: sic eos qui erant spiritus conditi a Creatore Deo facit angelos mittendo nuntiare quod jusserit." Peter Lombard, *PETRI LOMBARDI COLLECTANEORUM IN PAULUM CONTINUATIO IN EPISTOLAM AD HEBRAEOS,* Patrologia Latina 192.409-410. Accessed through http://pld.chadwyck.com/all/fulltextaction=byid&warn=N&id=Z500096560&div=5&sequence=4&file=../session/1370293116_7995 on June 3, 2013. Cf. Luther's comments on Psalm 104:4 in WA 4.177, where he names and disagrees with Augustine and Cassiodorus: "Et b. Augustinus concordat, nisi quod sentit sic ordinari textum: qui facis spiritus tuos angelos. Similiter et Cassiodorus. Quod tamen non est necesse, immo secundum Apostolum Hebr. 1. melius, ut iacet, accipitur. Quia angelos suos fecit non deos, sicut filium genuit deum, sed fecit eos spiritus et urentem ignem. Sic enim disputat ibidem."

thus this verse should be read as saying that God made spirits into angels, not that He created the angels as spiritual beings. Luther disagrees with that interpretation, saying:

> In the first place, the apostle certainly understands and uses the word "makes" with reference to the creation of angels, as if he were saying: "He makes," that is, creates, angels so that they have a spiritual existence. In the second place, their reasoning, namely, that the word "angel" does not state what the nature of the angels is but describes their office, lacks sufficient validity. On the contrary, it does refer to their nature, though the name has been given because of the office and because of its proper meaning, just as one reads many things in Scripture that are called by the names of future happenings … With these words [the apostle] praises their substance metaphorically, namely, that they are neither flesh nor body but "spirit" or wind, that is, of a most refined and exceedingly swift nature. Therefore Psalm 104:3 says of them: "Who walkest on the wings of the winds," that is, of the spirits or angels.[28]

This spiritual nature is also exceedingly resplendent and bright, giving them what was described in Matthew 28:3 as an "appearance like lightning." Luther concludes by likening the angels to stars based on their mobility and vividness as they joyfully honor and praise God.[29] And as before, here Luther still displays evidence of his immersion in the methods of the prior academic theological tradition in the formulation of his argument in this passage: he offers an opinion, provides counter points, and then presents his own

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[28] LW 29: 116; WA 57.III.105-6: "… tamen non sine racione potest illis dissentiri, primo quidem, quod utique Apostolus de creacione angelorum hoc verbum 'facit' intelligit et allegat, ac si diceret: 'facit', i. e. creat angelos ad esse spirituale. Secundo, quod non satis valet racio eorum, quia videlicet 'angelus' non sit nomen nature, sed officii, imo est nomen nature, licet ab officio et proprietate tributum, sicut multa in Scripturis leguntur nominata nominibus eciam futurorum eventuum … Quibus verbis eorum substanciam commendat methaphorice, videlicet, quod non sint caro neque corpus, sed 'spiritus' seu ventus, hoc est subtilissime et velocissime nature; unde dicitur de eis psal. 53.: 'Qui ambulas super pennas ventorum', i. e. spirituum seu angelorum." Cf. WA 57.II.53: "Quare patet, quod 'angelus' et 'apostolus' Grece idem fere significant, sicut et Latine 'nuncius' et 'missus'. Utrunque enim est nomen officii." (*Scholia* on Romans, 1516) In that passage, Luther is emphasizing 'angel' as a term of office, a position he has apparently rethought by the time he forumlates his *Lectures on Hebrews*.

[29] LW 29: 117; WA 57.III.106-7: "Insuper sunt nature clarissime et lucidissime sicut resplendencia sive rutilancia ignis, ut patuit in angelo ad sepulchrum Christi sedente, cuius 'vultus erat sicut fulgur'. Nam quod hic habetur 'flamma ignis', in Hebreo secundum B. Hieronimum habetur: 'ignem urentem'. Quod Ioannes Reuchlin dicit 'ignem vibrantem seu scintillantem', sicut gladius politus adversus solem aut concavum speculum vibrat seu scintillat; quo utique significantur angeli esse ardentes et mobiles sicut stelle scintillantes, quia iubilant et gestiunt in laudem et honorem Dei, secundum illud Iob 38.: 'Cum me laudarent astra matutina et iubilarent omnes filii Dei' etc."

opinion. We also see 'substance language' again in his strong emphasis on angels as spiritual substances.

Luther turns to considerations of the angels' mission in his review of subsequent verses. In 1:14,[30] the question arises as to whether or not all of the angels are sent. According to Dionysius,[31] the higher orders of angels are never sent. Furthermore, Luther cites Daniel 7:10[32] as evidence in support of Dionysius. But he also points to Luke 2:13[33] as a counter argument in support of Paul. Thus, Luther's conclusion is that Dionysius is speaking about two separate missions of the angels. He also cites Bonaventure's commentary on the *Sentences,* pointing out that the Seraphic Doctor calls them the "exterior" and "interior" missions of the angels,[34] noting the precise book, question, and distinction. However, instead of "exterior" and "interior," Luther chooses the terms "visible" and "invisible."[35] By "visible," he means the mission of the angels to humanity,

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[30] "Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" (NRSV)

[31] Luther actually names him as "Saint Dionysius." This ends up being somewhat amusing, given how Luther's attitude towards him shifts in the future – as we will see.

[32] "A stream of fire issued
and flowed out from his presence.
A thousand thousand served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.
The court sat in judgement,
and the books were opened." (NRSV)

[33] "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying …" (NRSV)

[34] II.d10.a1.q2, "Liber II Sententiarum," 2.262: "Est enim missio *exterior*, quae est ad nos; et est missio *interior*, quae est ad Angelos, sed propter nos. Si de missione *exteriori* loquamur; sic non competit omnibus Angelis, quia non competit superioribus agminibus, sicut dicit Dionysius, 'quia ea quae praeeminent, usum exterioris officii nunquam habent'; in quo significat, quod intelligit de missione *exteriori*, quae est ad nos. Si autem intelligamus de missione *interiori* quae est ad Angelos propter nos; sic *mitti* competit omnibus, quoniam superiores mittuntur ad medios, et medii ad infimos, dum *revelando* purgant et illuminant ea quae nobis expediunt; et hoc totum est propter nos…"

[35] LW 29: 121; WA 57.III.112: "Famosa est questio, an omnes angeli mittantur. Divus Dionisius dicit superiora agmina nunquam mitti. Hic vero clarus est textus, quod 'omnes mittuntur in ministerium'. Dionisio certe suffragatur Daniel, qui capitulo 9. distinguens inter assistentes et ministrantes ait: 'Milia milium ministrabant ei et decies milies centena milia assistebant ei.' Ergo minima pars angelorum est in ministerio. Rursus huic apostolo videtur consentire Lucas 1.: 'Et facta est cum angelo multitudo celestis exercitus', ubi videntur affuisse cum angelo nunciante omnes angeli, ut et supra dixit: 'Adorate eum, omnes

and by "invisible," he means the mission of the angels to each other, with the superior angels sent to the inferior. Again, in this discussion, we see his scholastic mindset at work: the framing of a question, the offering of opinions on both sides of the matter, and Luther's statement of his own conclusion. In addition, Luther's tacit assumption that there are distinct orders of angels that occupy differing levels of superiority serves as evidence of his connection to the prior tradition at this point in history.

Luther deals with one of the angelic orders in his comments on chapter 9. The cherubim are mentioned specifically in this biblical passage (verse 5) and he remarks that while they are assumed to be angels, no one is sure what form they had, be it that of birds or of winged angels. He goes on to say:

> Therefore one can take the position of later interpreters and understand that cherubim to be the contemplative wisdom of Christ. For, as St. Gregory says, flying means contemplation. Thus Psalm 18:10 says that "He arose and flew on the wings of the winds," that is, on the contemplations of the spirits. The name points out enough. For "the cherubim" are understood to be "the fullness of knowledge." Therefore here [the apostle] also indicates that the wisdom of Christ in glory is one thing, and that the wisdom of Christ crucified is something else. For through the latter the flesh is depressed, through the former the spirit is lifted up.[36]

So Luther's concept of the cherubim is that they serve as guides to contemplation, bringing the faithful to true understanding of Christ — in keeping with the prior tradition which connected the Cherubim with knowledge. He follows the passage quoted by remarking that true understanding can be difficult to acquire, particularly when one

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angeli eius.' Respondetur ergo, quod Dionisius loquitur de missione visibili, ita enim non omnes mittuntur, Apostolus autem de invisibili, et ita omnes mittuntur. De quo lacius Bonaventura li. 2. ques. 2. dis. 10."

[36] LW 29: 202-3; WA 57.III.201: "Ideo alii formam avium, alii formam angelorum alatorum acceperunt. Quare in inferioribus consistendo per Cherubin intelligi potest sapientia Christi contemplativa. Nam per volatum, ut ait Beatus Gregorius, intelligitur contemplatio. Sic psal. 17.: 'Ascendit et volavit super pennas ventorum' id est contemplationes spirituum. Quod nomen satis indicat. 'Cherubin' enim interpraetantur 'plenitudinem scientiae'. Ideo et hic dicit [18] 'Cherubin gloriae', subindicans, quod alia sit sapientia Christi gloriosi et alia Christi crucifixi. Quia per hanc deprimitur caro, per illam elevatur spiritus."

chooses to confront the apparent contradictions in Scripture. Some (Luther highlights the Jews) focus only on the one "face" of the cherubim, at the expense of the other; they focus only on the humanity of Jesus and not his divinity. But the cherubim are turned towards the mercy seat, indicating that one has to look past the concealment of Christ's divinity within His humanity, an 'obstruction' that will be removed in a way similar to the tearing of the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies during Christ's Passion. Until then, faith enables humanity to know Christ not only in His humanity, but in His divinity as well.[37] So what then are the cherubim doing? They are serving as spirits of contemplation, guiding believers both to and onto a path that leads to Christ's glory.

II.2. 1526-1535

This period of Luther's life could perhaps be best called, "The Building of Church and Family." Having laid the groundwork of his emerging movement, Luther continued to establish an independent church and Protestant society, as well as a happy and healthy family — his first son was born in 1526. Both the *Large* and *Small Catechisms* were published in 1529, a few months before the Marburg Colloquy, where Luther and Zwingli attempted to reconcile their views on the Eucharist. Luther also attended the Diet

[37] LW 29: 203; WA 57.III.201-2: "Porro in contemplacione gloriae Christi maxime omnium necessaria est prudentia spiritus, ne unius 'faciem' secuti et alterius relinquentes in diversum rapiamur errorem. Quod accidere solet his, qui Scripturae repugnantias in Christo conciliare negligunt [et] in unam tantummodo partem feruntur. Exempli gratia: de Christo dicitur, quod sit rex omnium gloriosissimus. Hanc faciem Cherubin ita sequuntur Iudei, ut a Christo crucifixo longissime recedant, non attendentes alteram faciem Cherubin, ubi dicitur Esaiae 53.: 'Non est ei species neque decor.' Et sic de aliis contradictoriis seu contrariis in Christo propter humanitatem et divinitatem concordantibus. Ideo scriptum est facies Cherubin fuisse versas in propitiatorium. Et iterum: 'In ore duorum vel trium constabit omne verbum.' Velum primum, quod erat ante sanctum, significabat absconsionem et fidem futurae Ecclesiae, futuri evangelii et futurorum sacramentorum, non enim Synagoga cernebat haec praesentia. Ideo in passione Christi hoc ipsum fuit 'scissum a summo usque deorsum', quia tunc Ecclesia prodiit et Sinagoga desiit. Secundum vero, quod fuit ante [sanctum] sanctorum, hanc nostrae fidei absconsionem significat, in qua Christus homo regnat, quod similiter auferetur, cum apparuerit in gloria. Sic cognoscimus Christum secundum carnem et divinitatem, sed non nisi per fidem, ut 2. Cor. 4.: 'Nos autem revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes' (scilicet per fidem) 'transformamur in eandem imaginem a claritate in claritatem.'"

of Augsburg in 1530, and spent much of the early 1530's reforming and reorganizing the curriculum and faculty at the University of Wittenberg, eventually becoming dean there in 1535. Protestant ordination was likewise established in 1535. Yet despite all of Luther's progress, he was still forced to deal with affronts to the sanctity of church and family. He spent much of this period locked in literary battle with Joachim, margrave of Brandenburg, who had taken a willing mistress and forced her husband to lay aside all claim to her before being exiled. Joachim finally had the decency to die in 1535, to which Luther remarked that he was, "going from one whore to another."[38] The same year, an Anabaptist sect ousted the bishop of Münster, and established the "Kingdom of Zion," and the practice of free love. Luther's response? "[It is] clear as day: the devils are squatting one on top of the other like toads."[39]

II.2.1. Angelic Characteristics

Thus, in our consideration of the second period of Luther's life, we begin to see some definite changes in his approach to certain questions regarding the angelic nature. Frankly speaking, these questions do not seem all that important to him at this point — there just is not much material that deals with them. What passages we do find, however, show that in this period, he begins to move away, comparatively speaking, from considering the angelic being in itself — while maintaining his previous conclusions. Thus, 10 years or so after he made a similar claim, Luther teaches that the devil's angels

[38] Haile, *Luther*, 76-80.
[39] Ibid., 125.

lost many things in their fall: grace, life, righteousness, even heaven itself. Nevertheless, they still remain angels according to their natures.[40]

And again, as we touched on in our exploration of the previous period, in many ways the particularity of the angelic body or being is not something Luther considers to be important. For example, in this period he writes that according to Psalm 104:4,[41] we learn that humanity cannot actually see the angels in their true forms. God makes the angels into flame and light in the same way that the bread of the Eucharist becomes the body of Christ. Thus, we only see them as represented by the flame and light of their appearances.[42] He echoes this point again in a later Christmas sermon, preaching that on the first Christmas, when the shepherds 'saw' the angels, they actually did not — because the angels are invisible (what the shepherds saw was the light and heard the Word that the angels possess).[43]

Despite his indebtedness to the previous tradition, one place we find evidence of Luther's disconnect from its emphasis on deciphering the traits of angelic being can be seen in a sermon given on St. John's Day in 1527. There, Luther comments on the extent to which humanity can truly understand the angels, preaching that many schools have made the attempt to understand the substance of the angels, "who are form." But this is risky thinking, he says, and these theologians (whom he does not name) come to believe

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[40] "Enarratio Psalmi LI." WA 40.II.384: "Sic de Angelis: decidentes de coelo amiserunt gratiam, vitam, iusticiam, et tamen habent integra naturalia …"
[41] "… you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers." (NRSV)
[42] "Vom Abendmahl Christi Bekenntnis [Handschriften]." WA 26.441: "Hie sind auch zweyerley wesen als Engel und wind odder engel und fewrflammen gleich wie ym sacrament brod und leib, Noch macht hie die schrifft einerley wesen aus beiden und spricht: Er macht seine Engel zu winde und flammen, gleich wie er seinen leib zu brod macht, das man sagen mus von solchem winde und flammen: Das ist ein Engel, Und die schrifft also redet, das, wer solchen wind odder flamme sihet, der sihet den engel, Nu kan ia niemand einen engel sehen ynn seiner natur, sondern allein ynn seiner flammen odder hellen gestalt …"
[43] "Predigt am Stephanstage (im Hause)." WA 37.239: "**Die lieben hirten haben die angelos auch nicht gesehen,** quia **sie lassen sich nicht sehen,** sed lumen viderunt et verbum audierunt."

themselves to be superior in their knowledge. But, counters Luther, who really has understood the human soul? And if we have yet to know the human soul, how can we say that we understand an angel? The answer, says Luther, can be found in the sermon that the angels preach at the Annunciation: from that sermon, humanity can know what sort of spirits the angels are.[44] Therefore, one can and should form conclusions based on Scripture and learn from what one finds within it. As Scripture says, the angels' hearts are full of peace and joy in Jesus Christ. And thus, the Christian does not learn what sort of bodies or clothing they wear; instead, one learns the depths of the greatness of the angelic heart.[45]

II.2.2. Knowledge, Speech, and Power

Regarding angelic knowledge and angelic speech, Luther says even less on the subject during this period than he did previously. Having already stated his belief that the angels see and experience God "perfectly," he clarifies this statement in a 1535 sermon given on Trinity Sunday. There, he preaches that the Trinity, as one God in three Persons, remains an unfathomable mystery to all creatures — including the angels. The only source for understanding it, he says, is through the revelation of Scripture.[46] As to angelic speech, Luther says nothing during these years.

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[44] "Predigt am dritten Weihnachtsfeiertag früh." WA 23.742: "Aliae scholae multos libros scripserunt de substantia angelorum, qui essent **gestalt,** et huc illuc **gefaren** cogitationibus. Et **erfaren, wie sich geschicks weren in yhrem wesen.** Adhuc nullus homo **ergrundet hat,** quid humana anima quam secum habet**, was fur ein ding sein,** quomodo scirent, quid angeli essent? Sed si inspicimus, ut hic se **dergeben,** agnoscimus optime, ut homo non potest melius agnosci quam ex sermone, qui est praecipuum signum, per quod homo agnoscitur. ... Sic ex hoc cantico agnoscimus angelos quales spiritus."

[45] "In die Stephani Vesperi." WA 29.681: "Et cor eorum, ut tantum sit pax. Sic Christus 'gaudium est angelis', satis scriptum. Ibi non videmus iterum, qualia ossa et vestes habeant, sed quid cogitent, quid in corde habeant, profunda angeli videmus i. e. optimum in angelis i. e. cor eorum video."

[46] Church Postils 8.33: "Ein Sermon auff das fest der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit." WA 41.275: "So nu jemand wissen wil, wie es zugehe, sage, es sey ein unbegreifflich wesen, uber alle Engel und Creatur, da man nicht mehr von koenne wissen, denn uns die Schrifft anzeiget."

He does again comment on the extent of angelic power, however, and in fact expands on his thoughts from earlier. Then, he wrote that he would rather have a single angel on his side than a terrifyingly strong armed force. But now, he preaches that every single angel remains more powerful than any physical creature or the entirety of Creation itself. However, Luther also writes that some angels are more powerful than others. While such a statement may seem odd, given what we have already seen of his disdain for the hierarchical structure of Pseudo-Dionysius's angelology, Luther nevertheless writes in a 1533 sermon given on Michaelmas that there are some angels who are more powerful than others, just as there are those people who are more powerful among humanity. Thus, a prince has a more powerful angel than does a count; a count has a more powerful angel than does a common person, and so on. Luther also preaches here that even the smallest child, as soon as it is born, has a guardian angel that it itself greater than all kings or emperors, protecting and safeguarding him or her from the devil.[47] Interestingly, it seems that he is here echoing Aquinas (who, as we have seen, held that a child received its own angel at the moment of birth), rather than Bonaventure or Biel (both of whom held that angelic protection began in the womb).

At this point, we can turn to our example text from this period: the *Lectures on Zechariah*.

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[47] "Predigt am Michaelistage (im Hause)." WA 37.152: "Auch ist zu wissen, das die Engel unterschieden sind, Denn gleich unter den menschen einer gros, der ander klein, einer starck, der ander schmach ist, also &c.. Daher hat ein furst viel einen grossern und sterckern Engel, der auch weiser ist denn ein Graff, und ein graff einen grossern denn ein ander gemeiner man, Und so fort an, Dazu ist auch gewis, das ein klein kindlin, so bald es geborn wird, einen Engel hat, welcher viel grosser und gewaltiger ist denn der konig zu franckreich oder der keyser, Die selbigen Engel bewaren und behuten uns, das uns der Teufel nicht schaden thue …" Cf. House Postils 3.387, where the translator inserts the phrase "of higher rank," which is not present in the original text.

II.2.3. *Lectures on Zechariah*

The history of the *Lectures on Zechariah* is easier to trace than that of the *Lectures on Hebrews* — but not by much. There are two main versions of this text: the first was published, in Latin, as part of the first collection of Luther's exegetical works, the *Erlangener Ausgabe* (1526). The second, in German, Luther published himself in 1527. This German version was not a mere translation of the Latin, but a new text that Luther developed from his notes and manuscripts; he considered this version to be the definitive one. According to Hilton Oswald, Luther's major concern was for the laity, and he composed this book to show them that even the minor prophets could show the importance of "simple faith in Christ."[48]

In actuality, Luther does not teach much regarding the angelic nature in the *Lectures on Zechariah*. His comments on the subject come from the 1526 version, and are framed in such a way that they emphasize his desire to distance himself Pseudo-Dionysius (and Jerome), in obvious contrast to the *Lectures on Hebrews.* From his comments on 2:3:[49]

> Here I omit what Jerome dreams up … I also omit the hallucinations of Dionysius[50] about the celestial hierarchy – that some angels teach others, that some are of very low rank, some of very high rank, and I don't know what all he writes so shamelessly as he himself had seen it.

Luther's reasoning is that since Christ, in Matthew 18:10, mentions angels beholding the face of the Father, there is no need for angels to illuminate each other – the very fact that

[48] LW 20.ix-x.
[49] "Then the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him…" (NRSV)
[50] See my comments in previous chapters on the complex nature of the relationship between Luther and Pseudo-Dionysius.

they see God the Father means that God illumines them Himself.[51] In his exegesis of 6:5[52] as well, Luther make his disdain for Dionysius known. According to Luther, Dionysius and other "sophists" have gone through some extreme theological gymnastics to explain Daniel's vision (in Daniel 7:10) of a "thousand thousands" of angels serving God. Instead, Luther argues, Daniel is speaking in that passage about the ministry and assistance of the angels. The same thing is taking place in Zechariah 6:5; there too, "… Scripture makes the angels the ministers of God who assist God…".[53]

II.3. 1536-1545

As Mark Edwards has so convincingly shown,[54] in the later years of Luther's life, his writings reveal his fierce, constant conviction that he was living during the last days of Creation. The Papal Antichrist had seized control of the Catholic church, the Turks had invaded, and false prophets — his Protestant opponents — corrupted true doctrine and lead people astray. And even though the true Gospel had again been given to the people, they seemed unwilling to change their sinful ways — the Brandenburg affair and the "Kingdom of Zion" are but two examples. I would characterize him as, "Raging against the Decaying World," in this period. Part of his frustration was no doubt due to his own health problems; Luther's recurring difficulties with kidney stones began in 1536, with a

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[51] LW 20.26; WA 13.568: "Omitto, quae somniat hoc loco Hieronymus angelos ignorasse mysterium incarnationis et quae somniat Dionysius de coelesti hierarchia angelos alios ab aliis doceri quosdam esse infimos, quosdam summos et nescio quae alia, quae ita impudenter scribit tanquam ipse spectarit. Christus dicit: angeli vident faciem patris. Deus ergo est, qui illuminat angelos, qui utitur eorum opera, non alii ab aliis illuminantur. Omnia vero ista quia in consolationem afflicti et perterrefacti populi fiunt, oportebat agi hanc comoediam."

[52] "The angel answered me, 'These are the four winds [or spirits] of heaven going out, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth." (NRSV)

[53] LW 20.64; WA 13.604: "Sic enim facit scriptura angelos ministros dei assistere deo, sicut est in Daniele: decies centena milia ministrabant i. e. assistebant ei. In quo loco loquitur de ministerio et assistentia angelorum. Misere autem torserunt se in eo explicando sophistae et maxime Dionysius ille de coelesti hierarchia satis ridicula somnia confinxit."

[54] Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles,* 16-7.

truly life-threatening incident in 1537.[55] The year 1536 saw not only the expulsion of the Jews from Germany at the command of Elector John Frederick,[56] but the intensification of Luther's anger with Albert of Mainz, a cardinal who had abused his office for political and economic reasons.[57] His struggle against the Papacy also grew more impassioned, culminating in two works: the excellent, thoughtful *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), and the troubling, vulgar *Against the Papacy at Rome, Founded by the Devil* (1545, featuring a series of polemical cartoons). But perhaps most damaging to Luther during these years would be the deaths of so many important people in his life. In 1536 alone, Anne Boleyn was beheaded, both Erasmus of Rotterdam and Lefèvre d'Étaples died, and William of Tyndale was murdered. Yet these pale compared to the death of Luther's daughter, Magdalena, in 1542. It only makes sense that the events of this period would impact his angelological concerns.

II.3.1. Angelic Characteristics

In this period, Luther again reveals a shift in his prioritization of the types of questions he wishes to ask and answer regarding the nature of the angels. He does make certain claims regarding the angelic nature itself, which we will explore first. However, even these comments are most often made in the context of a comparison with humanity. Other comments on the angelic nature take the form of explorations of the intermediation of the angelic nature between God and humanity — which we will examine in the latter half of this section. One point of discussion that does not take place in this period, in

[55] Ibid., 9.
[56] Haile, *Luther*, 288.
[57] Ibid., 181.

contrast to the previous two, is the tension between angelic nature vs. angelic office; Luther simply does not deal with that sort of question.

Regarding the angelic nature itself, Luther teaches his audience that even if one accepts the teachings in the Catechism, one still cannot say much about the nature of the angels. They do not have bodies, but they do have an exquisite nature; however, because our nature is so much less than theirs, we are not able to understand it.[58] Luther emphasizes the angels' humility; urging his followers to a life of virtue, he counsels them to "wear and hold fast to this angelic garment, humility," rather than donning the cowl and attitude of a monk[59]. Likewise, he highlights the angels' courage, writing that they are fearless, due to being filled with perfect charity.[60] Though they may be spirits, the angels are the greatest creatures. Compared with them humanity is nothing.[61]

Usually, Luther makes such statements of comparison to use these very qualities to teach his congregation a lesson of some sort — about themselves, about God, or even about the angels as angels. In a sermon, Luther highlights the glory and honor of the angels and their noble, contemplative existence when he speaks about the devil's loss of such attributes and gifts in his fall (thus in this period showing that he also believes in an angelic fall). But this discussion is a means by which Luther urges his congregants to

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[58] "Predigt am Michaelistage." WA 47.854: "**Kanst nicht das malen** bonos et malos Angelos, quam accipe **fuer dich** Catechismum. 1. de **wesen** et natura Angelorum non possumus multa dicere, quia non habent corpora et membra, sed **viel kostlicher natur,** quae meliores oculos **&c.. mit uns gar gering gegen sie,** non **konnens begreiffen**."

[59] Church Postils 8.63-4; "Am dritten Sontag nach Trinitatis, Epistel. I. Pet. V." WA 22.26: "Dabey kuend man rechte heilige Christen kennen und spueren besser denn bey aller Moenchischen und Einsidlischen heiligkeit und wercken, Denn es ist noch nicht grosse muehe, ein grawe Kappen ertragen, auch nicht so gros des nachts auff der erden ligen und zu mitter nacht auffstehen, Es thuens auch, und muessens offt thun boese Buben, Diebe und Moerder. Aber dis Englische kleid zu tragen und fest zu halten, das wil der Welt nicht also eingehen, wie man doch mit Moencherey alle Welt gefuellet hat …"

[60] "Disputatio reverendi patris ac praeceptoris D. D. Martini Lutheri contra Antimonos Vitebergae habita 1539." WA 39.I.564: "Qui timet, in eo non est perfecta charitas. Sic angeli non timent, id est, non expectant poenam a Deo, sic neque christiani."

[61] "Predigt am Tage der Geburt Christi, nachmittags." WA 49.179: "Videmus, quales sint spiritus, sunt maximae creaturae, nos nihil ad angelos."

refrain from pride, and to fear God and God's punishment — being cast down into the abyss, in the same way God punished the devil and his angels.[62] Another example is when he preaches that the angels also completely fulfill the Law in heaven. But again, when Luther makes that statement, he is in the midst of teaching his congregation about what humanity is, has been, and should become in the future — people who "[love] God with the whole heart and your neighbor as yourself."[63]

But Luther also worries that his constant praise of the angels, and his emphasis on how much more perfect, more intelligent, greater, and just plain *better* they are than humanity, might be causing his congregation to become depressed or ashamed because they are incapable of measuring up to such a high standard. Sometimes, he even contributes to such despair, lashing out in his own pessimism regarding humanity's capabilities. As he says in one of his sermons, the world as it stands is nothing more than a collection of unworthy people who do not fear, or love, or praise God, and instead blaspheme, disobey, and despise His Word — in all ways, followers of the devil! If God

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[62] Church Postils 8.59; "Am dritten Sontag nach Trinitatis, Epistel. I. Pet. V." WA 22.23: "Was ist schrecklicher denn der ewige, unwiderbringliche fall und verstossung der hohen Englischen Natur, da der Teufel sich der edlen seligen Geister ehre und herrligkeit und ewigen Gottes anschawen selbs beraubt und zu seiner ewiger, untreglicher verdamnis, damit das er hat sich wollen Gotte gleich setzen? Und durch gleiche Hoffart auch den Menschen in jemerlichen fall gebracht hat? Was bistu aber fur ein blinder, verfluchter Mensch, der du mit deinem stinckenden schendlichen stoltz und hohmut dich selbs dem leidigen Geist gleich machest? Damit du selbs dir zu feind machest alle Welt, dazu dich wider die Goettliche Majestet selbs setzest, dafur doch auch die Engel erzittern muessen? Wiltu dich nicht schewen noch fuerchten dafur, das du bey allen Leuten gunst und das gemeine Gebet verleurest? So fuerchte dich doch dafur, das Gott seinen blitz und donner, damit er auch eisen Felsen und Berge zuschmettert, uber deinen Kopff gerichtet und dich ewiglich in Abgrund stuertzen wird, wie er den hoffertigen Geist mit seinen Engeln gestuertzt hat."

[63] Church Postils 5.185-6; "Predigt am 18. Sonntag nach Trinitatis." WA 45.146: "Darumb hat nu Gott die eine Lere gegeben, die da offenbaret, was der mensch sey, was er gewest ist, und was er wider werden sol, Das ist die Lere des Gesetzes, so Christus hie anzeucht: 'Du solt Gott lieben von gantzem hertzen' &c.. Als solt er sagen: Also bistu gewest und also soltu noch sein und werden, Jm Paradis hastu den schatz gehabt und warest also geschaffen, das du kondtest Gott von gantzem hertzen lieben, Das hastu nu verloren, Nu aber mustu wider also werden, Sonst wirstu jnn Gottes Reich nicht komen, Also spricht er durre und klar an andern orten: 'Wiltu zum leben ein gehen, so halt die Gebot'. Jtem: 'Thue das, so wirstu leben' &c.. Das mus kurtz umb gehalten sein, Und das man davon viel disputiren wolt, als moechte man on das (das da heisst Gott lieben von gantzem hertzen und den Nehesten als sich selbs) selig werden, da wird nichts aus, Es mus erfuellet werden, so rein und volkomen, als die Engel im Himel erfuellen."

loves the angels, they at least have proven themselves worthy of His love, glorious and noble as they are. How can God's love for humanity be explained?[64]

Thus, he counsels his congregants against such despairing thoughts; thinking in this way, he says, edges into questioning whether or not God keeps God's promises. While an individual may not be a saint, that individual is nevertheless part of the world. If God had intended His Word and message only for those who were worthy of it — those who are without sin — then He would have given it only to the angels.[65]

II.3.2. Knowledge, Speech, and Power

As in the previous period, Luther says little about the angels' knowledge and speech. What he does say is interesting, however, because it is as if he has been carrying on a conversation that has taken twenty years. Already, he has established that the angels see and experience God perfectly, though even that is not sufficient for them to understand the Trinity. And in this period, he makes the comment that the angelic inability to understand the Trinity is by no means a deficiency. The angels possess greater

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[64] Church Postils 3.356; "Euangelium Am Pfingst Montag. Johan. III." WA 21.484: "Zum fuenfften ist auch hie abgemalet der Nemer, dem solchs gegeben wird, Der heisst mit einen Wort die Welt. Das ist erst ein wunderbarlich, seltzam lieben und geben, Denn es ist hie zu gar ein frembd gegenbilde des, der geliebet wird, gegen dem. der da liebet. Wie reimet sich solche liebe Gottes zu der Welt? und was findet er an jr, darumb er sich so gar solt gegen jr ausschuetten? Wenn doch gesagt wuerde, das er hette die Engel geliebet, das weren doch herrliche, edle Creaturn, der liebe werd. Aber was ist sie gegen die Welt anders denn ein grosser hauffe solcher Leute, die Gott nicht fuerchten, vertrawen noch lieben, loben noch dancken, aller Creatur misbrauchen, seinen Namen lesteren, sein Wort verachten, dazu Ungehorsam, Moerder, Ehebrecher, Diebe und Schelcke, Luegener, Verrether, vol untrew und aller boesen tuecke, und kurtz, aller Gebot ubertretter und in allen stuecken widersetzige und widerspenstige, sich hengen an Gottes Feind, den leidigen Teufel?"

[65] Church Postils 3.364; "Euangelium Am Pfingst Montag. Johan. III." WA 21.491: "Darumb huete dich, das du nicht dich selbs ausschliessest und solchen gedancken stat gebest: Wer weis, ob mir es auch gegeben sey? Denn das were Gott in seinem Wort luegengestraffet, sondern dawider ein Creutz fur dich machest und nach diesen worten also sagest: Ob ich nicht bin S. Petrus oder Paulus, so bin ich aber ein stueck der Welt, Hette er es wollen allein den wirdigen geben, so hette er es allein den Engeln muessen predigen lassen, die sind rein und on suende, Ja, er hette es auch S. Petro, David, Paulo nicht muessen geben, Denn sie sind auch Suender gewest so wol als ich, Jch sey aber, wie ich wolle, so weis ich, das Gottes Wort war ist, Und wo ich das nicht anneme, so thete ich uber alle ander suende auch diese, das ich Gottes Wort und Warheit fur luegen hielte und lesterte."

understanding and intelligence than does even the Church, not to mention their "perfect purity and holiness."[66] Likewise, their language, says Luther, far surpasses all others.[67]

Having explored the myriad of shorter works Luther wrote during this period, let us now begin our exploration of his masterwork *Lectures on Genesis* — which contains a surprising amount of angelology, often in surprising places.

II.3.3. *Lectures on Genesis*

Technically speaking, Luther began the *Lectures on Genesis* in June 1535. But after only a month, plague broke out in Wittenberg, interrupting university life so greatly that the next date we can be sure Luther lectured was in January 1536. As far as chronology is concerned, these are the most definite statements one can make about the *Lectures*. More problematic than chronology, however, is the text's authenticity, as we noted in our discussion of Soergel's article. The manuscript that has survived is actually an edited and reworked version of transcripts of the lectures. Given the conventions of publication at the time, editors were far more likely to interpolate material; some scholars see a great deal of such material in this work, such as anachronistic references and the conversion of offhand allusions into complete citations. While such questions of authenticity are important, the prevailing opinion is that Luther's voice and theology remains consistently

[66] Church Postils 4.279; "Euangelium am VIII. Sontag nach Trinitatis Matth. VII." WA 22.146: "Solten nu nicht andere der trefflichen namen misbrauchen? oder nicht moegen triegen und verfueren, was man im namen der Kirchen furgibt und rhuemet? so doch niemand zu gleuben ist, der etwas anders wolt leren, ob er gleich keme mit dem zeugnis, das er ein Apostel, ja auch ein Engel vom Himel were, ich wil schweigen der Kirchen, welche noch nicht so hohen verstand und erleuchtung noch so vollige reinigkeit und heiligkeit hat als die Engel im Himel."

[67] "Predigt am Weihnachtstage, abends." WA 49.282: "Angelorum lingua longe superat omnium oratorum linguas."

present in the *Lectures* as we have them today.[68] And as we will see, Luther's angelology, as he presents it here, is consistent with his earlier claims as well.

In this text, Luther's first consideration of the being of the angels takes place during his exegesis of the Creation account in Genesis 1, particularly verses 14-19, which give him an occasion to share his thoughts on the creation of the angels themselves and their Fall. After pointing out that interpretation of these verses is difficult,[69] he offers a few comments regarding the nature of the created light and the corresponding darkness. The lack of any body to actively shine this light (due to neither the sun nor the stars having been created yet) causes some to take an allegorical approach, says Luther, and assert that the light is actually an angel. In their reasoning, the separation of light from darkness is actually God dividing the good angels from the evil angels.[70] Luther, however, calls this theory, "toying with ill-timed allegories." Why? Because Moses is not allegorizing – he is writing a history, a comprehensible account of creation for the uneducated.[71]

Still, the fact remains that Moses did not write anything concerning the creation of the angels. Likewise, he did not mention their fall either. And, says Luther, apart from

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[68] LW 1.ix-xii. See also John A. Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2008), 6-7, where he lays out a convincing argument to support the validity of the *Lectures of Genesis* as a source for Luther's own thought. Partictularly illuminating is Maxfield's comment that Luther obviously knew about and supported the publishing of the first edition of the *Lectures* – given that he himself wrote the preface and postscript published therein.

[69] "These are difficult matters, and it is unsafe to go beyond the limit to which the Holy Spirit leads us." LW 1.17; WA 42.14: "Haec sunt ardua neque tutum est ultra progredi, quam Spiritus sanctus nos ducit."

[70] Augustine makes this case in I.17 of *De Genesi ad litteram,* J-P Migne, ed. (Paris: venit apud editorem, 1841-2), 34.258.

[71] LW 1.19; WA 42.15: "Sed hic celebris agitatur questio: Qualis nam illa fuerit Lux, qua illa rudis moles coeli et terrae fuit illuminata, cum tamen neque sol nec stellae essent conditae, et tamen textus veram et corporalem hanc lucem fuisse ostendat. Haec res quibusdam occasionem dedit, ut Allegoriam quererent, et exponerent 'Fiat lux', hoc est, angelica creatura. Item 'separavit lucem a tenebris', hoc est, separavit Angelos bonos a malis. Sed hoc est ludere intempestivitis allegoriis (Moses enim Historiam narrat), non est interpretari scripturam. Praeterea Moses scripsit hominibus rudibus, ut haberent testimonia aperta de Creatione. Igitur tam absurda huc non sunt afferenda."

two instances (John 8:44,[72] and the story of the serpent in Genesis 3), nothing else in the Bible treats them either. "It is surprising that Moses should remain silent about these weighty matters."[73] To fill this gap, humanity invented theories about the angels, namely that there are nine choirs and that the fall of the evil angels lasted nine days, after an enormous combat. Luther believes these theories grew out of people's observations on the conflict continually facing the church. As a parallel to the way that fanatics and the corrupt rage against true teachers, people envision a conflict between the angels. However, Luther claims, such a theory is nothing more than the same sort of "imaginary idea" that arises whenever "rash" people choose to respond to questions with no clear answers.[74]

Nevertheless, Luther is clear that he believes that some angels did fall – the mechanism and motivation behind that fall is what is in question. He is relatively indifferent to Bernard's conclusion, that the devil had seen the plan God intended for humanity – that they should be raised higher than the angels – and responded, in his pride, with envy. Luther feels no one should be forced to agree with Bernard. "But this much is certain: the angels fell and the devil was transformed from an angel of light into

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[72] "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (NRSV)

[73] LW 1.22; WA 42.17-8: "Hic videtur Moses sui oblitus, quod de duabus maximis rebus nihil agit, nempe de Creatione et lapsu Angelorum, ac tantum corporalium rerum conditionem persequitur, Cum tamen non dubium sit Angelos esse creatos. De creatione autem, de pugna et lapsu eorum nihil omnino extat in scriptura, nisi quod Christus dicit: 'In veritate non stetit', et Mose infra, cap. 3. commemorat miserabilem historiam de serpente. Mirum igitur est tacere de his tantis rebus Mosen."

[74] LW 1.22-3; WA 42.18: "Hinc factum est, cum nihil certi haberent homines, ut aliquid fingerent, nempe quod novem fuerint Angelorum chori ac tanta multitudo, ut novem totos dies ceciderint. Finxerunt etiam de pugna maxima, quomodo boni Angeli restiterint malis. Hoc puto sumptum esse ex pugna Ecclesiae, quod sicut pii Doctores pugnant contra malos et fanaticos, Ita etiam somniant inter Angelos fuisse pugnam contra malos, qui voluerunt usurpare Divinitatem. Sed ita fit, ubi nulla clara testimonia extant, ita plerumque existimant homines temerarii sibi licere fingere quaelibet."

an angel of darkness. Perhaps there may have been a conflict between the good and the evil angels."[75]

Regardless of the mechanics, the angels, as a characteristic of their creation, possessed an innocence that could undergo a change.[76] The angels who remained with God were confirmed in their righteousness at a point after their creation, and thus became incapable of falling. Had the evil angels not rebelled, they would have been confirmed in the same way.[77] Here, Luther is following the tradition, particularly the thought of Augustine (perhaps by way of Lombard) and/or those he influenced, as we explored above. Furthermore, the punishment the evil angels received conformed to the manner of God, says Luther. God often takes the "most eminent" and teaches humility by rejecting it. Luther points out that Peter echoes this stance in II Peter 2:5;[78] by comparing Noah's world as it existed before the flood with the world after, Peter is showing how that first world was a comparable paradise. In the same way, God did not spare the angels, "His most outstanding creation," their punishment.[79] The greater the gifts one possesses, the greater the pride one possesses, says Luther – which was the angels' sin.[80] And great and

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[75] LW 1.23; WA 42.18: "Et Bernhardus cogitat Luciferum vidisse in Deo, fore ut homo super Angelorum naturam elevaretur, Hanc homini foelicitatem superbum spitirum invidisse ac sic esse lapsum. Sed valeant ista, quantum merentur, Ego neminem coëgerim talibus opinionibus assentiri. Haec tamen sunt certa et lapsos esse Angelos et Diabolum ex angelo lucis esse factum angelum tenebrarum. Forte etiam inter ipsos Angelos bonos et malos concertatio fuit."

[76] LW 1.112; WA 42.85: "Porro quoniam obiter in mentionem de natura Angelorum incidimus, non dissimulandum est, quod Patres scribunt, similitudinem aliquam fuisse inter conditionem hominis et Angelorum. Sed haec similitudo neutiquam referenda est ad propagationem, quae in spirituali natura non est, sed ad imperfectionem. Sicut enim de homine constituto quasi in medium dixi, ita quoque Angeli, cum primum sunt conditi, non sunt ita constabiliti in sua natura, ut non possent peccare."

[77] LW 1.113; WA 42.85: "Quodsi Draco sive mali Angeli perstitissent in innocentia, etiam sic essent postea confirmati, ne possent cadere. Ad hunc modum Patres loquuntur, quod sint Angeli in Iusticia creati et postea in ea etiam confirmati, sed eos, qui lapsi sunt, secundum Christi dictum in veritate non stetisse."

[78] "… and if he did not spare the ancient world, even though he saved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood on a world of the ungodly …" (NRSV)

[79] LW 2.3; WA 42.264: "Sic praestantissimae naturae, ipsis Angelis, non pepercit …"

[80] LW 2.4; WA 42.264: "… tanto etiam magis superbiat. Hoc Angelorum, qui lapsi sunt, peccatum fuit."

powerful as they were, the angels were still unable to "endure the judgment which the Lord will bring upon those who blaspheme."[81]

As valuable as these considerations may be, Luther still wants to emphasize that they are merely theoretical, and thus unworthy of too much exertion. His summary:

> … [Moses] wanted to write what was necessary and useful to know. Other, unnecessary information about the nature of the angels and the like he passed over. Therefore we should not be expected to say more about this whole business either, especially since the New Testament, too, deals in a rather limited way with this doctrine; it adds nothing beyond the fact that they have been condemned and are held bound in prison, as it were, until the Day of Judgment (Rev. 20:2, 7). So it is sufficient for us to know that there are good and evil angels and that God created all of them alike, as good. From this it follows necessarily that the evil angels fell and did not stand in the truth. How this came about is unknown; nevertheless, it is likely that they fell as the result of pride, because they despised the Word or the Son of God and wanted to place themselves above Him. More than this I do not have.[82]

Luther does have more to say on the subject of the angels' nature and organization, however. One of the points he establishes, without equivocation, is that angels are spiritual beings, as it says in Psalm 104:4.[83] He further understands that the multiplicity of terms that refer to angels at various points in the Bible can be confusing, and thus spends some time clarifying what angels are *not*. In his comments on Genesis 32:3-5, he makes sure to distinguish the difference between the nature of angels and their

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[81] LW 1. 296; WA 42.218: "Ne Angelos quidem, etsi fortitudine et virtute maiores sunt, sustinere posse iudicium, quod in blasphemos exercebit Dominus." Luther is also referring again to 2 Peter 2, specifically v. 11: "whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not bring against them a slanderous judgement from the Lord." (NRSV)

[82] LW 1.23; WA 42.18: "Sed Mose quia scripsit rudi et novo populo, quae scitu erant necessaria et utilia, scribere voluit. Alia, quae non erant necessaria, de Angelorum natura et similibus praeteriit. Quare a nobis quoque de hac tota re nihil debet expectari amplius, praesertim cum novum quoque Testamentum partius de hoc loco agat, nihil enim addit, quam quod sint damnati et teneantur quasi in carcere vincti usque ad iudicii diem. Igitur satis nobis ista scire esse angelos bonos et malos, Deum autem creasse omnes pariter bonos. Hinc sequitur necessario Malos Angelos esse lapsos et non stetisse in veritate. Quomodo autem id sit factum, nescitur, verisimile tamen est, ex superbia esse lapsos, quod Verbum seu Filium Dei contempserunt et se ei voluerunt anteferre; plura non habeo."

[83] LW 5.216; WA 43.577: "Quia Angeli sunt spiritus et ignis, iuxta illud Psalmi 103. 'Qui facis Angelos tuos spiritus, et ministros tuos ignem urentem'."

office, returning to a theme from the earlier period of his life. The same word that Moses uses in 32:1 for the angels – מַלְאָךְ *(malak)* – is used in verse 3. Luther emphasizes that this is a term for the angelic office, not the angelic nature: "For according to their office they are messengers; they are soldiers at a post and on guard for the whole world, but according to their nature they are spirits."[84] Sometimes, angels are also called "gods," which can also confuse matters.[85] But Luther says that this label is due to their divine office. By contrast, only God is called עֶלְיוֹן *(elyon)*, the Most High, for the reason that only He is above everything.[86] Though his approach and reasoning is different in this period and in this work, Luther reaches virtually the same conclusion that he did in his *Lectures on Hebrews* — that the name "angel" is linked to their office rather than their nature — nearly thirty years earlier.

Having clarified some of the terminology that Scripture uses to refer to the angels, during his discussion of Genesis 3, Luther also chooses to clarify the terms that describe particular angelic choirs – as well as their organization as a whole. One specific target here is Pseudo-Dionysius, whom Luther takes to task for his organization of both the ecclesial and the celestial hierarchies. Pseudo-Dionysius's theories certainly do not come from Scripture, Luther writes, nor do they contain any instruction or comment about

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[84] LW 6.96; WA 44.71: " …idem vocabulum est, quo supra angelos nominavit. Est enim nomen officii, non naturae. Secundum officium enim sunt nuncii, sunt milites in statione et excubiis pro toto orbe terrarum. Secundum naturam autem sunt spiritus." Note that he made the same distinction in 1517, in his *Lectures on Hebrews*, as already shown above.

[85] The editors of LW 2 offer Psalm 82:6 as an example: "I say, 'You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you;" (NRSV). Verse 1 also provides an example: "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:" (NRSV).

[86] LW 2.390-1; WA 42.542-3: "Angeli, Principes mundi, ministri verbi, Iudices etiam appellantur Dii: quia divinum munus sustinet: Sed Deus dicitur (Eleon) excelsus seu altissimus, quia solus et unus est super omnia."

faith. Thus he asks, "Who told him there were nine choirs?" Luther also disdains the invention of a tenth choir[87] by the Franciscans.[88]

However, the cherubim do appear often in Scripture, and Luther does acknowledge that little is said about them by the "Latin theologians," other than that the word itself means "fullness of knowledge." Here as well is an opportunity for Luther to comment against Pseudo-Dionysius, and after listing each of the nine choirs of angels, he says, "Who does not realize that these are nothing but idle and useless human ideas?"[89] Luther then offers his own opinion as to the meaning of the word 'cherubim.' Instead of a term for a particular choir of angels, he instead posits that the word is a descriptive term for a particular mode of angelic appearance – that of "a happy and friendly expression, with a chubby and well-rounded face, whether this be a human face or some other."[90]

He goes on to note that in I Kings 6:29, the cherubs described there have "chubby and cheerful" faces, as well as wings. However, Luther says, this is "not because the angels actually have wings, but because they cannot be depicted otherwise." And so the

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[87] As Soergel points out, this particular criticism is a development in Luther's thought. In his early commentary on Psalm 33 (WA 3:181-2), Luther refers to Christ "dwell[ing] among the ten choirs of angels," but elaborates no further. Soergel, "Angels," 69.

[88] LW 1.235; WA 42.175: "Postea in Hierarchia inferiore Potestates, Archangelos, Angelos. Haec quis non videt nihil esse quam ociosas et futiles hominum cogitationes? Postea in Hierarchia ecclesiastica dicit esse Episcopos, Diaconos, Subdiaconos, Lectores, Exorcistas etc. Talibus nugis occupatur ille scilicet principis Apostolorum et Doctoris gentium discipulus. Et tamen sic eius autoritas iactata est, ut inflati hypocritae statuant omnia esse tanquam ex oraculis prodita, Cum nusquam unum verbum de fide, de ulla sacrae scripturae utili eruditione faciat. Sed quis dixit ei Esse novem choros? Cur postea Franciscani addiderunt decimum, tanquam palatium, in quo diva Mater habitaret? In summa hae sunt nugae dignae, quas discant et admirarentur Papistae, postquam sanam doctrinam tam pertinaciter impugnant."

[89] LW 1.234-5; WA 42.174-5: "De his apud Latinos nihil est, nisi quod dicunt significari vocabulo plenitudinem scientiae. Apud Graecos est Dionysius, quem iactant Pauli discipulum fuisse, sed id non est verum. Est enim plenissimus ineptissimarum nugarum, ubi de Hierarchia coelesti et ecclesiastica disputat. Fingit novem Choros tanquam sphaeras, supremam Seraphim, Deinceps Cherubim, Thronos, Dominationes, Virtutes, Principatus. Haec quis non videt nihil esse quam ociosas et futiles hominum cogitationes?"

[90] LW 1.235; WA 42.175: "Ut Cherubim intelligas Angelos, qui apparent facie non rugosa, nos tristi, sed laeta et exporrecta fronte, facie plena et pingui, sive sit ea humana facies, sive alia. Est igitur Cherub nomen generale, quod non constituit nomen singulare inter ordines Angelorum, sicut Dionysius somniat, sed ad apparentiam pertinet, quod florida specie et iuvenili facie se offerunt hominibus."

angel in Isaiah 6:6, who flies and has a cheerful, beautiful face is called a cherub. Still, if a certain "luster" is added to these youthful faces – a luster like that of Stephen's in Acts 6:15, whose eyes "shone pure joy" – then the angels are called 'seraphim.'[91] Someone familiar with Isaiah would no doubt point out that the angel in Isaiah 6:6 is called a 'seraph' in that text. But Luther presents an argument here that the names 'cherubim' and 'seraphim' are not terms of differentiation, but of description. Thus, one could argue – as Luther does, as we shall see directly – that the angel in Isaiah 6:6 could be both a cherub *and* a seraph.

He continues his argument along these lines by discussing the name 'seraph' next. He points out that calling an angel a 'seraph' is using that term generically, because by doing so, one is merely emphasizing the fiery nature of their appearance. "Therefore one may conclude that the seraphim are angels who not only are handsome and have a chubby face, like the cherubim, but are also endowed with brilliance." This brilliance is the source of the characteristics of the angels as they are described in Matthew 28:3,[92] Psalm 104:4, and Luke 2:9.[93] Furthermore, this same fiery appearance is attributed to Christ in Matthew 17:2.[94] And, says Luther, "Such will be our countenances when on the Last Day we are raised for the glory which Christ has gained for us."[95]

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[91] LW 1.236; WA 42.176: "Quod autem in libris Regum est de Cherubicis cortinis, intelligit etiam facies istas plenas et vegetas Angelorum una cum alis, non quod habeant Angeli alas, sed quod aliter pingi non possunt. Sicut Esa. 6. Cherub appellatur Angelus, qui venit volans, laeta et formosa facie, quales in tapetis pinguntur. Quodsi etiam accedat rutilantia, ut sic dicam, qualis Stephani facies fuisse dicitur laeta et hilaris, ex cuius oculis merae leticiae radiabant, tum dicuntur Seraphim. Nos Germanice possumus dicere facies, die bluhen und gluhen."

[92] "[The Lord's] appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow." (NRSV)

[93] "Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified." (NRSV)

[94] "And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white." (NRSV)

[95] LW 1.236; WA 42.175-6: "Sic Seraphim etiam generale nomen est Angelorum ab igni seu ardore propter qualitatem formae, sicut ostendit locus, Num. 21.: 'Immisit Deus in populum Hannehaschin Haseraphim, serpentes seraphim, hoc est, Urentes vel ignitos, ut intelligas Seraphim Angelos non solum formosos et

What is common to Luther's discussion of these angels – handsome, chubby-faced, and fiery as they are – is the underlying assertion that angels appear as human when they choose to meet with believers. Of course, even though they do so, the angels are still spirits, says Luther. The reason that they appear as human is because humanity is incapable of sensing purely spiritual beings, and is able only to discern images.[96] And so the angels take on these bodies, and do all that true humanity is able to do – eat, sit, speak, walk, etc.[97] When discussing the various passages that have to do with the lives of Abraham and his family, Luther expands on this mode of angelic appearance. The first place is during his consideration of Hagar's adventure in the desert in Genesis 16. Having been offered to Abram by Sarai, Hagar bore a child, and acted arrogantly towards her mistress. After Sarai's rebuke, Hagar flees to the desert, where an angel urges her to return home, and brings her news of the son she will bear, Ishmael.

In his interpretation of this passage, Luther mentions that Moses did not name the angel who spoke with Hagar. He also touches on the fact that according to Hilary, this manifestation – as well as others – is connected primarily to the Trinity. But he himself emphasizes this angelic manifestation as another example of the angels' tendency to assume human form so that they may be seen. This was the same procedure for the angel assigned to guard Paradise, for those who led Lot out of Sodom, and the one who

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plena facie, sicut sunt Cherubim, sed etiam fulgentes. Sicut in Euangelio pinguntur ad sepulchrum Domini sedisse. 'Erat, inquit textus, forma eius sicut fulgur' Matth. 28. Huc pertinet Psalmus 103.: 'Qui facit Angelos suos spiritus, et ministros suos flammam ignis', hoc est, rutilantem ignem. Sicut Lucae 2. dicitur, quod, cum Angelus venit ad pastores, circumfulsit eos claritas Domini. Tales etiam fuit Christi facies in monte Thabor. Tales erunt nostrae quoque facies, cum excitabimur in extremo die ad gloriam a Christo nobis partam."

[96] LW 2.46; WA 42.294: "Sicut etiam Angeli humana forma apparent, cum tamen constet simpliciter esse Spiritus; sed Spiritus nos agnoscere non possumus, cum ut Spiritus offeruntur: imagines autem agnoscimus."

[97] LW 3.207; WA 43.22-3: "Quia enim humana ista usurpant, assumunt corpus, loquuntur, incedunt, sedent, comedunt, etiam hominum more solent loqui …"

instructed the disciples within Christ's tomb and regarding His return. Even so, angels are capable of assuming other forms, in the same way that people are capable of wearing different clothes; likewise, the angels remain spirits in the same way that one does not change physical characteristics when changing one's clothes. Yet Hagar was still able to recognize the angel despite its ability to change the particulars of its appearance. The reason for this, Luther says, is that she had lived in Abraham's home for a long time, and had learned from him that the angels are involved in human affairs.[98]

In fact, Abraham and his household were frequently involved in angelic affairs. According to Luther, angels figure prominently in the story of the Lord's visitation of Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre. Luther's exposition of this passage is extremely complex, to the extent that only a few matters can be touched upon here. Like Bonaventure,[99] Luther highlights the extremity of Abraham's readiness to extend his hospitality to the three men as they appear on his doorstep. Among the possible reasons for this readiness, says Luther, is that he is quite familiar with the visitations of the angels, both from his own experience as well as those of his ancestors. Thus, the whole household remained eager to offer rest and refreshment to any guests – and hopeful that

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[98] LW 3.61-2; WA 42.592: "Quis angelus fuerit, qui cum Hagar locutus est, Moses non explicat. Hilarius sentit fuisse ipsum Deum, et fere huiusmodi apparitiones Angelorum accommodat ad mysterium Trinitatis. Etsi autem homines quoque vocantur Angeli: tamen Angelum indutum specie hominis hunc fuisse existimo. Cum enim se ostendunt hominibus, speciem corporis, in qua apparent, assumunt. Sic oculis cerni potuit Angelus, qui paradyso custos est additus. Item duo illi, qui eduxerunt Lothum e Sodomis: qui adsederunt ad sepulchrum Domini, qui docuerunt discipulos de reditu Christi ex nubibus. Mos enim hic perpetuus est Angelis, ut appareant in forma humana, sive iuvenili, sive senili. Sicut enim nos non semper eadem veste utimur: sed nunc hac, nunc alia induti nihil amittimus, aut mutamus de corpore nostro: Ita Angeli manent iidem spiritus, licet non semper eadem specie sese hominibus offerant, sed quasi vestem mutent. Agnovit autem Hagar statim Angelum, a quo proprio nomine appellatur. Quia enim longo tempore in domo sancti Patriarchae vixit, saepe ex eo audivit, gubernari humana per ministerium Angelorum. Demittit igitur cristas iam, quas in domo Abrahae contra dominam erexerat, et interrogata ab Angelo respondit se fugere Dominam Saram."

[99] As mentioned in I.4.6.

those guests would be angels.[100] Luther also takes a moment here to consider the fact that the Lord appeared to Abraham as three men. Given the fact that Abraham addresses these men as "Lord," Luther acknowledges that "our fathers" use this passage as evidence of the Trinity. But he also carefully makes the distinction that while this appearance may be evidence of the Trinity, one should not consider it strong or convincing evidence. Rather, it should be seen as adding to a foundation laid by other, clearer passages in Scripture.[101]

What is interesting here is that Luther maintains that the three 'men' were angels, and that "God wanted to appear to Abraham in a trinity of angels."[102] And while Abraham merely believed them to be saintly men, he nevertheless recognized the Lord in them and knew that when these men spoke, he was hearing God.[103] So what we have here, in the angelic appearance in Genesis 18, is God in the form of three angels who look like men — in contrast to his earlier conclusions in the 1523 Genesis sermons, where he interprets the visitation as being of God and two angels.[104]

A further angelic visitation to Abraham presents insight into the manner of angelic appearance – when the angel prevents Isaac's sacrifice in Genesis 22. According to Luther, this passage provides clues for determining whether or not a visitation is from one of God's angels or from one of Satan's. God Himself has implemented a distinction between the two, in that good angels appear in such a way that they inspire terror and awe

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[100] LW 3.188; WA 43.9: "Quanquam mihi non displicet illorum sententia, qui Abrahamum et suis, et suorum maiorum exemplis eruditum, et saepius expertum esse dicunt, quod Angeli humana specie venientes hospitiis piorum sint usi, sicut iinfra de Lotho in Sodomis audiemus. Haec experientia fecit, ut omnes hospites tractarent reverentius, et expectarent ipsi quoque conversationem cum Angelis."
[101] The argument in its entirety is found in LW 3.190-95; WA 43.11-14. See also Mickey Mattox's discussion of "Luther's Defense of the Patristic Trinitarian Exegesis," in his book *"Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs,"* 130-134.
[102] LW 3.194; WA 43.13: "… voluit enim Deus apparere Abrahae in Trinitate Angelorum."
[103] LW 3.219; WA 43.32: "… quia divinitus missi Angeli non suum, sed Dei verbum afferebant."
[104] "In Genesin Mosi librum sanctissimum. D. Martini Lutheri Declamationes." WA 24.340: "… das er unter den dreyen einen sihet, der Gott ist, und die andern Engel und doch alle drey annimpt wie menschen …"

due to their majesty. Thus, Mary was frightened when the angel appeared to her in Luke 1:29, and something similar occurs in Daniel 8:17.[105] And so when the angel appeared this time, "… heaven undoubtedly was opened, a strange light appeared, lightning and fire were seen, and at the same time there was a multitude of angels." This awesome display frightened Abraham to the extent that it completely prevented the sacrifice. A similar display occurred on Mt. Sinai,[106] with fire and thunder. However, when a good angel leaves, the believer feels joy, cheer, and serenity of heart. This is the exact opposite from the experience of a demonic visitation – the demon comes subtly and quietly, and leaves behind fear. Thus Abraham knew that a good angel had come to him.[107]

However, Luther's personal distrust of angelic visitations – despite his obvious assurance in the *Lectures on Genesis* that one can easily distinguish between holy and demonic appearances – is well-known, and is a repeated subject in the few secondary sources that deal with Luther on the angels, as we have seen. He himself acknowledges this distrust during his comments on Genesis 40, when he remarks that even when his movement was just launching, he asked God not to send him "dreams, visions, or

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[105] "So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I became frightened and fell prostrate. But he said to me, 'Understand, O mortal, that the vision is for the time of the end.'" (NRSV)

[106] Luther is likely referring to Exodus 19:16-19: "On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder." (NRSV)

[107] LW 4.129; WA 43.228: "Sed textus addit etiam externam notam. Quia diserte dicit, Angelum de coelo venisse, non venit more Satanae. Deus enim mirabile discrimen constituit, boni Angeli veniunt cum terrore, id est, cum aliqua maiestate, sicut Psalmus .103. Angelos sive ministros ignem urentem vocat, ita ut terreantur homines, ad quos veniunt. Sic Maria expavescit viso Angelo. Item Daniel capite 8. Adferunt igitur secum quandam maiestatem.

Ita hic Angelus delapsus est coelo, et coelum haud dubie apertum est, adfulsit nova lux, conspecta fulgura et ignis, adfuit una multitudo Angelorum, qua maiestate perterritus Abraham cultrum et cogitationem simul de mactatione abiecit. Sic in monte Sina cum flamma et tonitru apparuerunt, ut prosterneretur populus. Tandem vero discedunt boni Angeli cum laetitia, et relinquunt animos tranquillos et hilares. Haec ratio Deo est mittendi bonos Angelos, quo signo et Abraham admonitus est, adesse verum Angelum."

angels." The reason for this request was that he had been attacked by malicious spirits who offered such dreams and revelations. He had replied then that he had no desire for them and was not seeking them – nor would he trust them.[108] Even at this late stage in his career (between 1543 and 1545 for this specific passage), Luther still does not feel qualified either to receive visions and dreams or to interpret them, saying that he has made a "pact" with God that involves not receiving dreams, visions, or angels. Instead, he points towards Scripture as a teacher of all that is necessary for both life on earth and in heaven, as well as acting as a completely trustworthy source. That said, he also recognizes that God certainly can reveal things beyond Scripture, through dreams, visions, and angels. For his own part, he remains convinced that he is still influenced by all of the evil instituted by Satan through the Papacy. And so Luther clings to the sufficiency of Scripture, though he knows these difficulties are his own and would not categorize them as normative for all Christians.[109] As he says:

> Therefore I care nothing about visions and dreams. Although they seem to have a meaning, yet I despise them and am content with the sure meaning and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture. But if I have the Word, I am certain that God and His angels are at my side, and that even if they are not there visibly, they are nevertheless sending out their rays and directing me on the way of truth. This is my opinion, and I am not changing it.[110]

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[108] LW 7.119; WA 44.387: "Saepe autem dixit me ab initio causae meae semper rogasse Dominum, ne mihi vel somnia, vel visiones, vel angelos mitteret. Multi enim fanatici spiritus me adorti sunt, quorum alius somnia, alius visiones, alius revelationes iactabat, quibus nitebantur me erudire. Sed respondi me non expetere eiusmodi revelationes, et si quae offerrentur, me iis non habiturum fidem."

[109] LW 6.329; WA 44.246: "Quia non sum idoneus ad habenda aut interpraetanda somnia, neque eam facultatem aut scientiam mihi expeto, et pactum feci cum Domino Deo meo, ne vel visiones vel somnia, vel etiam Angelos mihi mittat. Contentus enim sum hoc dono, quod habeo scripturam sanctam, quae abunde docet et suppeditat omnia, quae sunt necessaria cum ad hanc, tum ad futuram vitam. Huic credo et acquiesco, ac certus sum, me non posse falli: Neque tamen aliorum donis derogo, si cui forte praeter scripturam aliquid revelaret Deus per somnia, per visiones, per Angelos. Sint sane dona, sed quae ego nec curo, nec desidero. Moveor enim infinita illa multitudine illusionum, praestigiarum, imposturarum, quibus mundus horribiliter sub Papatu longo tempore deceptus est per Sathanam: deinde sufficientia scripturae sanctae, cui si non adhibuero fidem, profecto nec Angelo, nec visioni, nec somnio facile credam. Sed ut dixi, haec ratio mihi peculiaris est, qua nihil aliis praescribere ausim."

[110] LW 7.120; WA 44.387: "Ideo nihil moror visiones et somnia, et quanquam videntur significantia, tamen contemno, et sum contentus certo sensu et fide scripturae sanctae. Quod si verbum habeo, certus sum,

As we can see, Luther did not believe that angelic appearances were categorically unnecessary or nonexistent, even after the promulgation of Scripture and the Incarnation. He was speaking purely out of his own, personal perspective — which he explicitly defines as being not normative. Likewise, his ambivalence regarding angelic appearances was not tied to the angels *per se*, but rather to his overarching distrust of the Devil and desire to never underestimate the very real threat of the Devil's powers to deceive, a concern that Schreiner presents convincingly in her article. Instead, Luther remained steadfast in his conviction that the angels were at work in the world at all times and in all places, even though he might never see them — and had no desire to do so.

II.4. A Conclusion

Certainly when comparing his thought to the extensive works of the medievals dealing with such concerns, we find that Luther does not spend a great deal of time on the being of angels. Nevertheless, he confronts the problem passionately, not only because of his desire to interact with and critique the prior tradition, but also because of his desire to educate his listeners on the spiritual beings he so greatly appreciated and treasured. And, simply speaking, the angels have important roles in the biblical narrative, forcing him to deal with them. As a biblical scholar, when confronted by passages that discuss the angels, that call them spirits and depict them as powerful beings who carry out the will of God, he must explain what such stories mean.

Deum et angelos mihi adesse, si non visibiliter, tamen instillare suos radios, meque in via veritatis dirigere. Haec mea sententia est, quam non muto." For more on Luther's struggle with uncertainty, see Susan Schreiner, "Unmasking the Angel of Light: The Problem of Deception in Martin Luther and Teresa of Avila," in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, ed. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 118-137. Particularly helpful is her discussion on page 123, where she comments on the responsibility of the believer to distinguish between God and the devil, as well as her treatment of the Holy Spirit as "Spirit of Truth" in Luther's theology, on page 127.

It follows, then, that we would find a great deal of consistency in the ways Luther answered questions of angelic being over the course of his life. After all, the stories in the Bible do not change. Likewise, he is firmly grounded in the previous angelological tradition. Over the course of his life, Luther maintains that the angels are created, spiritual beings, that they do communicate with humanity, that they are powerful in ways beyond human capacity, and that they are intellectual beings – all of which are evident in both early and medieval angelology. Fascinatingly, Luther's consistency likewise extends to his assertion that the angels are Images of God in the same way that human beings are.

For the most part, what few changes we find in Luther's notions of angelic being over the course of his life do not supersede his earlier thoughts. Instead, they add to and clarify what he had already said. Still, we do find some variations and changes, notably in the ways in which he distances himself from assumptions taken for granted during the medieval period. In the early part of his career, Luther closely follows — and expresses admiration for — Pseudo-Dionysius; in later texts, however, Luther's disdain for him is clearly felt. Luther also tries his best to throw out such clearly-defined notions of angelic hierarchy, though he also seems unable to do so completely (most often, in terms of the angels' roles as preservers and protectors, as we will examine in the next section). We also find variations of concern when comparing him to earlier authors. Questions that were so important to the medievals were also important to Luther in his early career, such as the nature of angelic speech. Later on, these questions received almost no attention. On a related note, Luther's thoughts on angelic being are generally more distant from the concerns of the medievals, showing his willingness to distance himself from what he feels are unnecessary fixations. His own concerns, in fact, seem much closer to those of

the church fathers, who were more than willing to state when they felt a line of questioning was more trouble than it might be worth. But even though he is more generous to the early authors upon whom he relies, Luther also does not refrain from sharing his concerns and criticisms of their work.

Nevertheless, by examining his extensive and involved discussion of angelic being, we find that Luther is clear that the main focus of his thoughts on the subject is not ontological, but relational. While the Bible certainly describes them as spirits, it describes them in other ways as well. These other passages are the ones he feels are most important, as he says on several occasions. Luther constantly pares away what he feels are the confusing and pointless facets of such ontologically-based discussion, returning the focus to considerations that help to know and understand not the angels' being, but their heart.

"[The angels] plan everything well, they comfort, counsel, help, protect and teach. We should acknowledge this, learn it and diligently thank God for it. It would be especially appropriate to pray to the Lord God when one rises in the morning, and say: "Dear God, let your holy angel be with me today, to steer, guide, protect and teach me."[1]

Chapter III: *Die Aufgabe:* The Role of Angels in Creation

In this third chapter, we will address the main ways in which Luther saw the angels fitting into the larger scheme of Creation. However, we will also begin to experience one of the primary difficulties in attempting to segment out particular instances of Luther's thought on the angels: conceptual overlap between answers to our framing questions, especially given the way in which Luther saw the relationship between angels and humanity. For him, most of what the angels do is tied to humanity. However, in this section, we will be dealing with how Luther describes the tasks and roles of the angels in ways that are not as intrinsically tied to humanity. Thus, we will see that he believed that the angels best served God and Creation as messengers and preachers, as preservers of the God's established order of Creation, and as protectors of both humanity and the entirety of Creation itself.

III.1. Pre-1526

In the early period of his career, Luther most often spoke of angels as divine messengers, as we have seen in his discussion of the angelic nature vs. the angelic office.

[1] "On the Angels," 7; WA 32.119: "… alles wol auslegen, trosten, radten, helffen, schutzen und leren. Das sollen wir erkennen, lernen und Gott vleissig dafur dancken, Und es were zu mal fein, das man zu morgens, wenn einer auffstehet, unsern Herr Gott ynn sonderheit drumb bete und sagte: Lieber Gott, las heut deinen heiligen Engel bey mir sein, mich regiren und furen, schutzen und leren.

III.1.1. Messengers and Preachers

So we find that in an Advent sermon given in 1522, Luther preached that an angel is a messenger, not in the sense of a letter carrier, but rather a person who brings an oral message from one person to another. In the Scriptures, such a designation applies to both angels and to apostles or priests, all of whom are God's messengers, as one finds in Malachi 2:7,[2] Haggai 1:13,[3] and Luke 9:52.[4] In addition, He says that the word 'gospel' also derives from this term. And thus, the celestial spirits of God are called angels, "because they are the highest and most exalted messengers of God."[5] In his sermon series on Exodus (chapter 3, specifically), when discussing God's message to Moses through the burning bush, Luther preaches that one should always understand that God speaks through the angels.[6]

But since the message the angels bring is most often the Word of God, Luther often characterized them specifically as preachers. In a Christmas sermon, in a section on the angels' visitation of the shepherds, Luther taught his parishioners that all preachers are, in a sense, angels, who are to engage God's Word — avoiding human doctrines — and live

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[2] "For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." (NRSV)
[3] "Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, saying, I am with you, says the Lord." (NRSV)
[4] "And [Jesus] sent messengers ahead of him." (NRSV)
[5] Church Postils 1.108-9; "Am dritten sontag des Advents Euangelium Matt. II." WA 10.I.2.166: "Wyr mussen der schrifft gewonen, das Angelus, wilchs wyr eyn Engel heyssen, ist eygentlich ßo viel gesagt, als eyn bote, nicht eyn boteleuffer, der brieffe tregt, ßondern der gesand wirt mundlich tzu werben die bottschafft. Alßo ist dißer name ynn der schrifft gemeyn allen gottisboten, ynn hymel und erden, es seyen die heyligen engel ym hymel odder propheten oder Apostel auff erdenn. Denn alßo spricht Malach. 2. von dem priesterampt: Die lippen des priesters bewaren die erkentniß, und auß seynem mund soll man suchen das gesetz gottis, denn er ist eyn engel des herren der scharen, und Haggei. 1: Es sprach Haggeus der engel des herrn unter den engeln des herrn. Item Lu. 9: Jhesus sandte engel fur seynem angesicht ynn das dorff der Samariter. Alßo sind es alle gottisengel, und werbboten, die seyn wort vorkundigen. Daher auch Euangelion kompt, das eyn gutte botschafft heysst. Die hymlischen geyster aber heyssen ßonderlich engel, das sie die hohisten und edlisten boten gottis sind."
[6] "Dominica post Francisci." WA 16.38: "Darumb sol man allezeit verstehen, das Gott durch Engel redet."

a heavenly life.[7] Therefore, the Gospel, says Luther, is a "supernatural sermon and light" which allows humanity to know Christ. One can see evidence of this fact in the Christmas story because the massage came not from a human being — for no human had any knowledge of it — but from an angel, who came from heaven to bring it.[8] Preaching on the Annunciation, Luther calls the Gospel message a *botschafft* that the angel brings.[9] Yes, they also bring the Law,[10] but Luther's emphasis is definitely on the angels' preaching of the Gospel. In one sermon, he says:

> But the angel shows most clearly that nothing is to be preached in Christendom except the Gospel, he takes upon himself the office of a preacher of the Gospel. He does not say, I preach to you, but 'glad tidings I bring to you.' I am an evangelist and my word is an evangel, good news. The meaning of the word Gospel is, a good, joyful message, that is preached in the New Testament. Of what does the Gospel testify? Listen! the angel says: 'I bring you glad tidings of great joy,' my Gospel speaks of great joy. Where is it? Hear again: 'For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'[11]

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[7] Church Postils 1.153; "Das Euangelium ynn der Christmeß. Luce. ij." WA 10.I.1.85: "Nu laß unß sehen, wer die prediger unnd schuler seyn sollen. Die prediger sollen Engel seyn, das ist gottis boten, und eyn hymlisch leben furen, alltzeyt mit gottis wortt umbgahn, das sie yhe nitt menschenlere predigen. Es ist gar eyn unfuglich ding, gottis bote tzu seyn und nit seyne botschafft werben. Angelus aber heyst eyn bote, und Lucas nennet yhn hie Angelus domini, gottis bote."

[8] Church Postils 1.147; "Das Euangelium ynn der Christmeß. Luce. ij." WA 10.I.1.76: "Darumb ist das Euangelium unnd seyn vorstand eyn gantz ubirnaturlich predigt und liecht, das nur Christum antzeygt. Das ist bedeutt tzum ersten darynn, das nit eyn mensch dem andern, ßondern eyn Engel vom hymel kam und den hirtten dieße gepurtt Christi vorkundigt, keyn mensch wuste etwas davon."

[9] "IN DIE ADNVNCIATIONIS MARIAE SERMO." WA 9.625: "Nuen sihe, das die Botschafft, die der Engel bringt, ist eben die predig, die do im ganzen Euangelio steet."

[10] In a sermon for the Sunday after Christmas, Luther writes: "… Moses received the law from the angels, thereby uniting Anna to a husband and demanding outward works from men." Church Postils 1.291; "Das Evangelium am sontag nach dem Christag. Luce secundo." WA 10.I.1.426-7: "… gleychwie der eynige Moses von den Engeln empfieng das gesecz, dadurch er die ehliche Hanna macht und werck erczwang ym eußerlichen menschen."

[11] Church Postils 1.149; "Das Euangelium ynn der Christmeß. Luce. ij." WA 10.I.1.78-9: "Aber auffs klerist tzeygt der Engel mit seynen wortten das Euangelium, und das sonst nichts tzu predigen sey inn der Christenheytt, nympt an sich das ampt unnd wortt dem Euangelio gemeß und spricht: Euangeliso, spricht nit: ich predige euch, ßonder: eyn Evangelium sage ich euch, ich bynn eyn Euangelist, meyn wortt eyn Euangelium. Szo heyst Euangelium, wie droben gesagt ist ym Aduent, eyn gutte, froliche botschafft, wilchs soll seyn die predigt ym newen testament. Wovon lautt denn das Euangelium? Hor tzu; er spricht: Eyn grosse frewde vorkundige ich euch, meyn Euangelium sagt von eyner grossen frewd. Wa ist die? Hor weytter: Euch ist geporn eyn seligmacher, Christus der herr, tzu Bethlehem, ynn der statt Dauid."

And so, in this story, the angel occupied the place of all preachers of the Gospel, the light of which is the divine glory and honor and shines through all who speak it. The shepherds, therefore, take the place of all those who hear it. In this, one can see the contrast between the two kinds of Word: the human word exalts humanity and teaches them to glorify their own works, the Gospel teaches humanity to rely on God's grace, to glorify and confide in Christ.[12] The angels bring something new and special to humanity, who then can pass that same Word along.

III.1.2. Preservers

The second role that Luther saw the angels fulfilling is that of maintainers and preservers of God's order within Creation. Thus, in his *scholia* on Psalm 97, Luther says that humanity has been ordered by the angels.[13] Likewise, Luther preaches that the angels themselves maintain this order within their own ranks. In a sermon on John 3:16, he says that different ranks of angels are assigned to different ranks of humanity. Thus, one person may have a mere angel, but a whole congregation has an archangel, a ruler a Principality, a king a Power, etc.[14] Here, we find one of the few times that Luther explicitly names the ranks of the angels according to the Dionysian scheme — but since this sermon was given in 1514, prior to his 'break' with Pseudo-Dionysius, his use of the traditional ranking system should not be all that surprising.

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[12] Church Postils 1.148; "Das Euangelium ynn der Christmeß. Luce. ij." WA 10.I.1.77: "Sihe, der gotlich rhum, die gotlich ehre ist das liecht ym Euangelio, das unß vom hymel umbleuchtet, durch die Apostelln und yhre folger, die das Euangelium predigen; denn der Engel ist an statt geweßen aller prediger des Euangelij, und die hirtten an statt aller tzuhoerer, wie wyr sehen werden. Darumb mag das Euangelium keyn ander lere neben sich leyden; denn menschen lere ist yrdisch liecht, ist auch menschenn glori, richtet auch menschen rhum unnd lob auff, macht vormessene seelen auff yhr eygen werck, da das Euangelium auff Christum, gottis gnade und guette, sich vormessen, auff Christum rhumen und trotzen leret."

[13] "SCHOLAE: PSALMUS XCVI. [XCVII.]" WA 4.117: "quia adeo verum deum habemus, ut angelis imperemus …"

[14] "SERMO. Ex αὐτογράφῳ quod inveniebatur in Monasterio Augustinen. Erffurdiae." WA 4.597: "Sic Angelos dedit singulis hominibus, sic Archangelos congregationi, principatus principibus, potestates regibus etc."

III.1.3. Protectors

Connected to his 'casting' of the angels as preservers of God's order, Luther also maintained that the angels are the great protectors of God's Creation. They are the protectors of humanity, as we see in his Gloss on Psalm 91, where Luther says that the saints of God should call upon the angels as protectors.[15] And in a sermon, he alludes to Psalm 33:8, characterizing the angels as an army, armed and ready to fight. Those who cling to God will be encircled by this angelic army.[16] But the angels also protect Creation as a whole; God cares for the entirety of Creation through the ministry of the angels. [17]

Still, we also see in his sermons that Luther believed that God's angelic protection was promised with a condition: that the believer remains on the path that God had ordained for him or her. In a 1525 sermon, given on Invocavit Sunday, Luther finds evidence of this condition in the story of the temptation of Christ in Matthew. In that story, the devil's misquotation of Psalm 91 ignores the fact that the angels will protect "the children of God in all their ways." Luther interprets 'ways' to mean the path that God has commanded His followers to walk, and that the angels' protection does not extend past this commission. And when the believer steps away from that path, not only does he or she suffer the withdrawal of angelic protection, but he or she also tempts God.[18]

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[15] WA 4.64: "Et in hoc velut sancti deum directorem et protectorem audent invocare atque angellorum custodiam sperare."
[16] "Dominica Exaudi." WA 16.272: "… et tantum angelus ut exercitus, sicut est in ps. Sunt armati et volunt **weren.** Qui heret in deo, certus est, quod angeli in circuitu eius sunt."
[17] WA 5.275: "… quod universam nostram salutem ministerio angelorum deus curat …"
[18] "Euangelion am Ersten Sontage ynn der fasten. Matthei am 4." Church Postils 2.143; WA 17.II.193-4: "Denn hie fůret er aus dem psalter Psal. 90. hereyn, wie Gott den engeln befolhen habe, das sie die Gotts kinder sollen behueten und auff den henden tragen. Aber der schalck lesst anstehen, das da bey stehet, nemlich, Das die engel sollen Gottes kinder behueten 'auff yhren wegen'. Denn also lautet der Psalm: 'Er hat seynen engeln befolhen uber dyr, das sie dich sollen behueten auff deynen wegen' &c.., das also die

At any rate, Luther maintained that some questions regarding angelic protection are pointless to consider, because they distract from what is truly important to know — much like questions of angelic being. Preaching on the fifth chapter of Genesis, and Enoch's assumption up into heaven, Luther remarks that while he himself does not know what or where Paradise may be (nor do Enoch or Elijah, for that matter!), the question itself is unnecessary. What matters is that God has a place, which God guards and maintains through the angels.[19]

III.1.4. *Lectures on Hebrews*

Strictly speaking, we do not find much discussion of the angels' role in Creation in Luther's *Lectures on Hebrews,* beyond the nature v. office debate outlined above. However, we can find some implicit assertions. In his discussion of 1:1, Luther brings angels into the picture and then, as is to be expected, suborns them to Christ. According to Luther, what 'the apostle' was attempting to do in the text was to establish that the Gospel as it was received from Christ should be given primacy over whatever humanity received through the prophets. After all, the Gospel comes directly from the Son Himself, rather than from an angel. The unbelief that existed among the fathers is a result of this dilution of God's Word.[20] What the angels taught was the Law, which remains valid

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huet der engel sich nach Gotts befelh nicht weyter streckt denn auff den weg, darynn uns Gott zu gehen befolhen hat. Wo wyr ynn solchen Gotts wegen gehen, sollen unser die engel warnemen. Aber der teuffel lesst anstehen den weg Gotts und deutet und zeucht der engel hut auf allerley, auch auff das, das Gott nicht geboten hat, das feylet denn und ist Gotts versuchunge."

[19] "In Genesin Mosi librum sanctissimum. D. Martini Lutheri Declamationes." WA 24.157-8: "Was aber das Paradis sey, weys ich nicht, Ist genug, das man gleube, das Gott einen rawm habe, da er noch villeicht auch Engel behalte, Und stehet drauff, das Henoch und Elias noch selb nicht wissen…"

[20] LW 29: 109-10; WA 57.III.98: "Instituit itaque Apostolus vehementissimum argumentum (ut dicitur) a minori, sic scilicet: Si prophetarum verbum est acceptum, multo magis evangelium Christi suscipiendum est, cum non sit propheta, sed dominus prophetarum, non servus, sed filius, non angelus, sed Deus, nec patribus, sed nobis loquens, ut scilicet excludat omnem causam incredulitatis, quam ipsi habuerunt maxime, quia per angelos, per Moysem et prophetas verbum acceperunt. Sicut Io. 9. dixerunt: 'Nos Moysi discipuli sumus, nos scimus, quod Deus locutus sit Moysi, hunc autem nescimus, unde sit.'"

despite the sin and disobedience that results from misunderstanding its true function and purpose: the imposition of external observances, transgressions, and punishments.[21] While these sections do not feature angels as a primary focus, we can glean one important point: for Luther, according to this work at least, angels serve primarily as communicators of God's Word.

III.2. 1526-1535

In this period of Luther's life, we find a definite increase in his interest in this aspect of angelology. However, we also find that his thoughts continue to place angels into the same three basic roles.

III.2.1. Messengers and Preachers

First, he refines what it means for the angels to be messengers. But he brings in an additional concept: that the angels function as God's "mouths," literally speaking God's speech in creation. Luther points to Malachi 2:7 for insight into the angels — the "sacred mouth[s]" described therein. They are God's mouths, mediators, receiving the mandates of God and bringing them to the people.[22] In his lecture on Galatians 3, Luther recalls the events on Mt. Sinai. The angels may have brought the law to Moses and the Israelites, but

[21] LW 29: 122; WA 57.III.113: "Queritur autem, quomodo verum sit, quod sermo per angelos dictus fuerit firmus factus, cum tamen Paulus ubique doceat legem pocius infirmatam, ut iam dictum est, et per ipsam abundasse peccatum, ut ad Romanos copiosissime disputat."

[22] "Predigt am Mittwoch nach Lucä." WA 41.457: "scriptura **nennet sie unsers herr Gotts engel** in Malachia: 'Ex ore sacerdotis' **&c..** quia est angelus i. e. **unsers herr Gotts bott, ein mitler, empfehet oben den beruff und bringts den leuten."** Luther's usage of the word 'mitler' here is quite interesting. Not only is this the only instance of him using it to refer to the angels as mediators, but according to a search of the online version of the WA, all other instances are connected in some way to Christ (and occasionally Moses). Though the word could be translated as 'agent,' given the contextual cues, I prefer 'mediator' — despite the other connotations the word might have. For Christ as 'mediator,' see WA 10.I.2.399: "Christus ist beyde Gott unnd mensch, ein sun unnd Herr Davids, Der halben er auch allaine ein mitler ist zwischen Got und den menschen…" For Moses as 'mediator,' see WA 24.5 and 6.

in truth, God was speaking through them.[23] And on the feast of the Annunciation, Luther preached that while the term angel may be Greek, these beings can be known as 'mouths' in German. But not because they carry mere words: they carry God's Word, which creates and administers.[24] And so the angels come, bringing messages to humanity, and join with us in song and fellowship, as we "acquire" the same God together.[25]

III.2.2. Preservers

But why send the angels at all? God also needs the angels, Luther says in his preface to the prophecies of Johannes Lichtenberger. God does not overtly order the world through the sword, he writes, but through the external Word preached, through food and clothing, through the home and those who keep it. Humanity does not see or hear the angels, in the ways that we see or hear each other; nor do we know where they are sent. Nevertheless, God rules Creation through them as a king or land-owner requires others to control his territory. He points to Daniel 10, and the angel's revelation of an angelic 'prince' of both Persia and of Greece. The same angel that resists others in God's name will also be present to the believer, learning with him or her all that is necessary of Christ and other articles of belief. These angels grieve for those who fall, but rejoice when the fallen repent.[26]

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[23] "Praelectio in psalmum 45." WA 40.I.495: "Lex ergo fuit disposita per angelos ut servos. in Monte Sina audivit Moses et populus loquentem deum, quae locutio fuit angelorum in persona dei loquentis."

[24] "Am tag der verkundigung Marie, Euangelion Luce. j." WA 17.II.404: "Denn Angelus ist ein kriechisch wort und heist auff teutsch ein bot, und ein solcher bott, der die botschafft im munde, nit in brieffen, sonder ihm worte tregt."

[25] "Predigt am Weihnachtstage, nachmittags." WA 41.485: "Ideo angeli veniunt ad nos et annunciant **froelich** nuncium **&c..** et nobiscum convenire et esse **her unden,** cum eundem dominum acquirimus."

[26] "Vorrhede Martini Luthers auff die weissagung des Johannis Lichtenbergers." WA 23.9: "Eben so braucht er auch der Engel, wie wol wir nicht wissen wie dasselbige zugehet, denn er befilhet yhn nicht das schwerd wie der weltlichen oebirkeit, noch das eusserliche wort wie den predigern, noch das brod und kleid, vihe und haus wie den haushaltern und eltern. Denn wir sehen noch hoeren der keines von den Engeln, wie wirs von den menschen sehen und hoeren. Dennoch sagt die schrifft an viel orten, das er die wellt durch die Engel regire, Eym yglichen keyser, koenige, fursten, herrn, ja eym yglichen

As we can see, Luther's understanding of angels as preservers and maintainers of God's order is greatly expanded in comparison with the earlier period of his career. Specifically, he begins to make distinctions about the various places in which the angels' work is seen. The angels preserve Creation in general, fostering God's peace on Earth through their governance and their maintenance of God's established order. In a sermon given on St. Michael's day in 1532, Luther states clearly that God is fully capable of maintaining and preserving Creation on God's own, without the assistance of the angels. But that is not what God wishes to do: God forms and maintains the household through father and mother, has established secular government to rule humanity, and even created the celestial bodies to give light. Thus, he says, it appears that God has established an order in which creatures serve one another. Christians should thank God for giving humanity all of these things — and "should also learn that God protects and aids us through his angels, for which we should surely thank God as well."[27]

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menschen seinen Engel zuverordent, der sein bestes dey yhm thu und fodder yhn ynn seim regiment und hirschafft. Wie Danielis .x. der Juden Engel klagt, das der Persen engel yhm widderstanden habe, Aber der Kriechen Engel kome yhm zu hulffe. Wie aber die lieben Engel hieruber eins bleyben fur Gott und doch widdernander sind fur den menschen, gleich wie die konige yhn befolhen widdernander sind, las ich hie dis mal anstehen umb der satsamen geister willen, wilche ynn einem augenblick koennen lernen alles was Christus und alle noetige artikel des glaubens foddern, und darnach auff fragen fallen, sich bekuemmern, was Gott fur der wellt gemacht habe, und der gleichen, auff das sie hie auch yhren furwitz zu bussen haben mit den lieben Engeln. Sondern wollen das fur nemen, das aller leichteste, wilchs sie auch, so bald sie es hoeren, kostlich wol verstehen."

[27] House Postils 3.375; "An S. Michaels tag, ein Predig von den Engeln, Euangelion Matth. am 18." WA 52.716: "Wol ist es war, das Gott uns erhalten und für dem Teuffel unnd allem jammer, für sich selb, on der Engel dienst, beschuetzen koendte, eben wie er uns wol koendte zu menschen schaffen wie Adam und Eva, on Vater und Mutter, wie er wol Land und Leut koendt regirn on Fůrsten, wie er wol koendte on Sonn und stern ein liecht, on pflugen und ackern und andere arbeyt uns brot geben, Aber er wils nit thun, sonder er hats also geordnet, das ymmer ein Creatur der andern dienen soll, Gleich nun, wie wir Got drumb sollen dancken, das er Vater und Mutter, weltliche Oberkeyt, Sonn und Stern, Korn und allerley Creatur uns gibt, das sie uns dienen und helffen zu disem leben, Also sollen wir auch lehrnen, das Gott durch seine Engel uns schutzet und hilfft, und sollen Got dafür auch danckbar sein."

Likewise, God exercises God's rule through them; echoing Paul and Moses, Luther remarks that God rules God's people through the mediation of the angels.[28] And he remains firm that the angels actively participate in creation and do so through their governance.[29] This governance extends not only throughout the whole of Creation, but also the entirety of human existence. In a different St. Michael's Day sermon, Luther preaches that God has created and ordained the angels to be the helpers and protectors of all creation in general and humanity in specific. Moreover, they are especially to resist the devil, who works with his own angels to utterly destroy God's works. Furthermore, we should know that while we remain on earth, the angels protect us by remaining near. And when we die and enter the next life in heaven, we learn the greatest good of God: that we are protected not only by the angels, but when we arrive in that other world, the angels will receive us.[30] Truly, God has left nothing to chance — even chance itself. Lecturing on Isaiah 10, Luther equates 'luck' or 'fortune' with "powerful angels."[31]

Through this governance, the angels bring the peace of God into Creation. Where God is, there the angels are as well, to offer and administer His peace and bliss.[32] The

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[28] "Ecclesiastes Salomonis, Cvm Annotationibvs D. Martini Lvtheri." WA 20.94: "Deus hunc populum rexit mediantibus angelis, ut Paulus, et Mose: 'Angelus praecedet te illic', commendat illis rectorem angelum populi."

[29] House Postils 3.385; "In festo Angelorum domi suae &c.." WA 36.338: "Ergo **so wil ich unserm herr Gott auch dienen und nicht einen muelstein an meinen hals hengen lassen umb yhren willen, Das lernet man heut, das die** angeli totum mundum **regirn et dienen dem jungen volck,** ut nos quoque id faciamus."

[30] "Predigt am Michaelistag, nachmittags." WA 34.II.270: "Ita audistis, quod deus creavit **die lieben** angelos et ordinaverit, ut **sind sein gehuelffen, mit yhm helffen regirn und die welt schuetzen, sonderlich uns,** et hoc contra **leidigen Teufe**l, qui cum suis angelis nihil aliud cogitat, quam ut dei opus **zureis, zubreche und zerstoere. Uber das sol wir weiter wissen**, quando nos angeli **geschutzt ynn dem zeitlichen leben, sinds auch weiter bey uns**, quando **wir sollen scheiden und von hinnen faren ynn ein anders leben**, quod etiam maximum **trost** homini, quando in aliud hospitium **sol khomen** nesciens, in quod, Ut discamus **die grosse gut** domini, quod non solum hic per angelos nos **beschirme,** sed quando **sollen ynn ein ander welt und reich,** illic **sollen sie uns empfahen."**

[31] WA 31.II.82: "Reccius: 'per fortem' i. e. angelum potentem."

[32] LW 20.271; "Auslegung des Prophetem Sacharia." WA 23.598-9: "Und was konnen da schaden sunde, tod, welt und teuffel, da Gott wonet? Muessen nicht daselbs auch alle Engel mit sein und dienen und solchen friede und selickeit helffen handhaben?"

angels have served and shown peace among themselves — and in turn established peace with humanity. Through this peace, one's heart may turn to God and itself know peace. Whatever peace exists, God manages it through the angels, who are at work even now among the impious.[33]

Supporting the function of the secular courts is one way in which the angels maintain this peace of God in the face of the devil's predations. In a sermon, Luther preaches that he sees the courts as constantly imperiled and assaulted by the devil, but is also sure that God's angels work unceasingly to oppose the devil's evil. If the angels were not involved at court, then there would be no harmony at all, due to the influence of the devil. "And were the dear angels not there to prevent these things from happening, they would tear into one another all the time and not a day would pass without war and bloodshed." God does allow some conflict — even to the point of permitting the devil some control — but the angels are always there, resolving conflict and finding peaceful resolutions. "However, where God pulls back his angels because of our sins, there people flare up, murder, kill, and violate women, to the great delight of the devil."[34] Again, it is God's desire that the angels go where there is need, says Luther. God could directly judge

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[33] "In die Stephani Vesperi." WA 29.682: "Si non servirent angeli et non haberent saltem pro se pacem, sed semper cogitant, ut hanc nobiscum **schaffen,** scilicet cor quietum ad deum et invicem pacem. Quidquid pacis est, hoc **schafft unser herr Got** per angelos etiam apud impios."

[34] House Postils 3.378-9; "An S. Michaels tag, ein Predig von den Engeln, Euangelion Matth. am 18." WA 52.719: "Darnach ist der dritte trost, da wir heut sonderlich von handlen, das wider solches des Teuffels arges und schedliches fürnemen Gott die lieben Engel darzu erschaffen hat, das sie uns dienen und uns schuetzen sollen, Denn es sind freundtliche, barmhertzige, guettige Geyster, die sich gern dazu lassen brauchen, das des Teuffels fürnemen gehindert werd. Darumb, wo die lieben Engel nit an des Keysers, der Koenige und Fuersten hoese weren, würde der Teuffel nicht lang sich seumen, sonder allen jammer anrichten, das sie alle stund in einander fielen. Aber unser Herr Gott lest es wol geschehen, das grosse Herrn uneins werden, Er lest den Teuffel bißweylen ein fewr anzuenden, aber da sind die lieben Engel, die leschen wider und machen frid. Wo aber Gott unser sünden oder ander ursachen halb seine Engel zu ruck zeuhet, da gehets ubel zu, mit moerden, brennen, weyber schenden und anderm, da hat der Teuffel lust zu."

trials, punish the guilty, even administer kings and kingdoms — but God does not wish to do so. Instead, the angels are the agents of administration between all people.[35]

The angels are even active in maintaining God's order on a smaller scale, by working within the household itself. As it is for the courts, so it is for the home: if God did not answer the devil's work through the agency of the angels, there would be no peace in the home:

> It's the same story in running a household; there would be no peace, only endless dissension, scolding, quarreling, stealing, unfaithfulness, neglect, and the like. Nothing would go right but all would be full of misery and heartache if the devil had his way. But God puts the brakes on him through his beloved angels, even though now and then he has lit a fire and caused some sort of trouble, till he had to yield and back off.[36]

III.2.3. Protectors

But perhaps the most important role of the angels in Creation, according to Luther, is as protectors. In a sermon on Luke 7, Luther asserts that the devil and his horde, rather than being so confident in their oppression of humanity, should instead be scared. When such affliction strikes us, God is with us — and so are enough angels to completely exceed the number of people living on earth. Wherever God is, God's angels are as well.[37]

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[35] "Predigt am Tage Aller Engel." WA 37.540: "Est eius bona voluntas, quod **der Engel mit zu braucht**. Ipse in terris posset suspendere fures et causas **richten und alle krieg fueren &c..** Sed non vult, sed collocat principes, reges, **die muessen sein ampt** inter homines **verwalten**."

[36] House Postils 3.379; "An S. Michaels tag, ein Predig von den Engeln, Euangelion Matth. am 18." WA 52.719: "Also im haußhalten auch würde kein frid sein, sonder ein ewigs geschellt, stelen, untrew, verseumen &c.. Nichts würde recht für sich gehen, sonder alles vol jammers und hertzleyd sein, wo es des Teuffels willen nachgehen solt. Aber Got stewret jm durch seine liebe Engel, ob er gleich bißweylen ein fewr angestecket, unrath und anders erregt hat, das er muß weichen und ablassen."

[37] "Dominica XVI. Euangelium Lucae VII." WA 32.124: "Es ist der Teuffel und sein Rotte, Wolan, so las sie getrost herkomen, sie sollen anlauffen, denn ist Gott bey uns, so werden wir ja mehr Engele bey uns haben denn auff jhener seiten menschen kopffe sind, Denn wo er ist, da werden freylich seine liebe Engel auch nicht weit von sein."

And they are present not just on behalf of humanity as a whole, but for individuals as well. Luther preaches in a St. Michael's Day sermon that he believed that each person had a guardian angel, who has been appointed to watch over him or her. This, he says, is the source of a common expression that is often used when acknowledging someone's avoidance of misfortune: "You had a good angel!" or "Your holy angel was with you and protected you." These proverbs are excellent reminders to us of the way God blesses people by giving the "beloved angels" care over them.[38]

Nevertheless, Luther remains clear that angelic protection comes so long as the believer stays on the path of righteousness, a concern he raised in his pre-1526 period that remains strong in this period of Luther's career. As he said on Easter Tuesday in 1533:

> It is, therefore, a necessary thing for us to know and believe it to be true that the devil appears form time to time, now this way, now that way. And the dear angels do the same. For we walk and stand always between angels and demons. The demons keep watch, purposing to kill, drown, mislead, and do harm. But the good angels are about us, if we are pious and God-fearing, to protect us and preserve us from harm. We should know this, so that we learn to fear God and daily, diligently cross ourselves and call upon God the more earnestly for protection against the evil spirits, lest they hurt us, or infect us with plague or some such thing, or cause some other affliction.[39]

These angels keep watch against these unending predations, he says, so that when the devil attacks with fire or bad weather or disease an angel is present to counter it. Not satisfied with these calamities, the devil also breaks bones, causes people to fall down stairs, and other kinds of accidents — but so much more would happen if the angels were

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[38] "Predigt am Michaelistage (im Hause)." House Postils 3.387; WA 37.152: "Sollen auch gewis wissen, das ein iglich mensch einen Engel habe, wie auch ein gemein sprichwort ist, das man pflegt zu sagen, wenn einer jnn fahr behutet ist: Du hast einen guten Engel gehabt."

[39] House Postils 2.34; "Predigt am Osterdienstag (im Hause)." WA 37.32: "Ergo sciamus esse verum, quod appareant. Nonnunquam possunt esse angeli, qui apparent, **wo wir gehen und stehen, sind wir zwisschen Engeln und Teufeln, Der Teufel sihet darauff, wie er uns ermorde, erseuffe &c..** Sed boni angeli adsunt et custodiunt nos. Discamus ergo hinc **Gott furchten und uns segenen und beten** contra malos spiritus, ne possint nos laedere, **uns vergifften mit pestilentz.**"

not there preventing such things, at God's command. When such things do happen, they do so with God's permission, as a source of learning — particularly so that people learn the importance of God's protection, says Luther.[40] A few years later, he reiterates this idea and elaborates further:

> Accordingly, Christ contests what the devil has said, When I walk the way God has commanded me, I know that angels are with me, and that they will wait upon and keep me. Thus, also, in the case of an obedient child, or a father, mother, or domestic servant going about the routine tasks of their calling, if a mishap befalls them, God will, through his angels, help and deliver them. But if they depart from the right way, the angels will not be there, and the devil can then at any moment break their necks, if God permits. And it will serve them right, for they should not be creating new self-designed ways, for that is tempting God.[41]

However, there are those on the other side of the equation, who ignore God's instructions and content themselves with unbelief. Luther believed that, in their case, God is fully capable and just in silencing the angelic ministry. In a 1532 sermon, Luther says, "When [God] says to Michael, Gabriel, and other angels, Hold on, let the devil be in control, for the scoundrels simply do not want to do what is right; so leave off, and let the

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[40] House Postils 3.375-6; "An S. Michaels tag, ein Predig von den Engeln, Euangelion Matth. am 18." WA 52.716: "Wider solchen argen, gifftigen, nachrettigen feinde hat Gott die lieben Engel verordnet, die wachen sollen, auff das, wo da ein Teuffel her schlegt und wirfft mit Pestilentz, mit fewr, mit hagel &c.., ein Engel da sey und wehre. Denn es ist ein stettiger kampff zwischen Engeln und Teuffeln. Der Teuffel wolt gern alles unglueck anrichten, wie wir teglich sehen und erfaren, das mancher ein bein bricht auff ebner erden, Mancher felt ein trepen oder stegen ab, das er selb nit weyß, wie jm geschehen ist. Solches und anders würde der Teuffel wol ymmerdar anrichten, wenn Gott durch die lieben Engel nit wehret. Er leßt aber derhalben uns solche eintzele stuck bißweylen sehen, auff das wir lernen, wenn Got nit alle stund wehrete, das der gleichen ymmerdar geschehen würde, Und wir deßhalb zum beten dest fleyssiger und Got für solchen schutz dest danckbarer sollen sein …"

[41] House Postils 1.318; "Am Ersten Sontag in der Fasten, Euangelion Matt. 4." WA 52.175: "Also widerspricht Christus dem Teuffel auch und antwortet: Wenn ich gehe, da es Gott befolhen hat, so weyß ich es wol, das die Engel bey mir sind und auff mich müssen sehen und mich bewaren. Also wenn ein kind in seinem kindlichen gehorsam gehet, Vater und Můtter, Knecht und magd in jrem ambt und beruff gehen, so jhn ein unfall zustehet, da will Gott durch seine Engel retten und helffen. Gehen sie aber auß dem wege, so sollen die Engel nicht da sein, und der Teuffel kan jnen den hals brechen, unnd geschicht jnen recht, Denn sie solten nicht newe noch andere weg machen, Denn das heyst Gott versucht."

pestilence kill them. That's exactly how it goes."[42] Pointing to Matthew 4, Luther reminds his audience that the devil misuses the Word of God. While one remains in one's place on God's path, the angels will protect him or her. Likewise, the devil promises his own protection — but this protection is for those who choose to step off the path and proceed against the Word.[43]

One final observation: during this period, some of Luther's most passionate words about the protection of the angels were spoken in the context of their relationship with children. From his 1532 St. Michael's Day sermon:

> So, our dear Lord Jesus Christ exhorts that we should willingly serve the youth and not mislead them, saying, If you have no qualms as regards the children, then tremble before their angels; and if you are so devoid of shame before the children, then remember that their angels are standing there, horrified at what is going on and finding it incredible. So if the angels are displeased, the very same angels who are always in the Lord God's presence, whom he knows and whose repulsion he observes — although he is already aware of this since nothing escapes him — and how they become angered and grieved, then it is plain that both God himself and his angels are greatly angered when a person offends the children.[44]

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[42] House Postils 3.376; "In festo Angelorum domi suae &c.." WA 36.334: "Quando dicit ad Michaelem **&c.. hoeret yhr auff, lasset sie den Teufel zemen, weil sie sonst kein gut wollen thun, lassts ghen, pestem erwurgen, so ghets an.**"

[43] "Zur Predigt über Matth. 4, 1 –11 am 22. Februar 1534 (Invocavit — zu Hause)." WA 48.343: "Abutitur verbo Dei Sathan. 'In viis nostris' id est: unusquisque in sua vocatione habet angelos custodes. Ipse autem promittit custodiam extra viam, contra verbum. Ideo Christus respondet."

[44] House Postils 3.384; "An S. Michaels tag, ein Predig von den Engeln, Euangelion Matth. am 18." WA 52.723: "Also sollen wir der Jugent gern dienen und sie nicht ergern, Nit allein damit, das man nicht arges vor jnen thun soll, Sonder auch, das man sie vom argen abhalte unnd fleyssig zur zucht halte. Als wenn ein kind ein fluch thut oder ein schambares wort laßt lauffen, das man mit ernst jm drumb zu rede unnd spreche: Scheme dich in dein hertz hinein und thu es nymmer. Denn da stehet dein Engel, der sihets und hoerets und erschrickt vor solchem fluch und sihet saur drüber. Wenn nun dein Engel dafür erschrickt und saur sihet unnd er fůr Gottes angesichte stehet, Meynest du nicht, Gott werde es mercken, der sonst alles sihet unnd weiß, unnd werde derhalb auch saur sehen und darumb zoernen? Darumb thu es bey leyb nymmer. Mit solchen und andern worten kan man die Jugent ziehen, da sie sonst in jrem sod auffwachset und alle unart lernet und uebet."

III.2.4. *Lectures on Zechariah*

As mentioned in the Introduction, both Soergel and Janz rightly emphasize this text as an important example of Luther's thoughts on the role of angels in Creation — though neither presents as complete a picture as possible. Generally speaking, when considering God's organization of Creation, most authors present either the "two kingdoms" doctrine or the "three estates" doctrine[45] as being the extent of Luther's thoughts on the matter. For these authors, angels are not mentioned at all in their schemata, while among our interlocutors, only Soergel points out Luther's formulation of a "four-fold" rule of Creation that includes the angels, offering this text as his example. Angels are simply not a factor for the rest, despite the simple fact that Luther's vision of the world included the angels as a fundamental force and unexcisable concept — and the *Lectures on Zechariah*

[45] An enormous amount of scholarship has addressed this particular facet of Luther's theology; I cannot do more here than offer a very basic summary of what this doctrine is, and point the reader to works that do more. To quote Heinrich Bornkamm, "Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms is three-dimensional. It refers to a) the relationship between church and state … b) the relationship, in general, between the spiritual and the secular … and c) the activity of the Christian in his own behalf and in behalf of others. But these three dimensions are only aspects of one and the same problem: that of the basic relationship between the gospel and the order of this world." *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 16. In his book (op. cit.), Wright argues that this doctrine has been overly politicized since the nineteenth century, and thus, understood as focusing solely on the political aspects of the relationship between church and state. Instead, he proposes a rereading of Luther that characterizes the Reformer as speaking to the tension in a Christian's life between living in the secular/physical realm and the divine/spiritual realm (see chapters 4 and 5, pp 113-171). See also: James M. Estes, *Peace, Order, and the Glory of God: Secular Authority and the Church in the Thought of Luther and Melanchthon 1518-1559*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions: History, Culture, Religion, Ideas 111 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), which has an excellent bibliography; see also John Tonkin. *The Church and the Secular Order in Reformation Thought* (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1971).

I must treat the "three estates" doctrine the same way. As Lohse argues in his own chapter on the "two kingdoms," (*Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 322), the "three estates" have not been given as much attention by scholarship. Simply put, Luther's "three estates" are "the priestly estate, the estate of marriage, and the temporal authority." (Ibid.) Bayer takes the concept a step further than does Lohse, and presents marriage/family as being 'inserted' into the fundamental order of Creation — the church, which he calls "the fundamental estate … that of the human being who is addressed by God, who is furnished with the ability to respond freely in thankfulness." The third estate, the political authority, exists as an ordering force only due to the fall of humanity into sin. *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*. Trans. by Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). Cf. F. Edward Cranz, *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law, and Society*. Harvard Theological Studies 19. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 173-78.

feature an extended presentation of the subject. We also find Luther dealing with each of the three major roles we have articulated, though each to a different extent in each version.

Casting the angels as the ministers of God is the major angelological task that occupies Luther in the 1526 *Lectures*. The riders that appear in 1:9[46] are "undoubtedly angels through whom God manages the visible world." He relies on the evidence of Hebrews 2:5[47] – which he interprets as God subjecting the visible world to the angels – as well as Psalm 91:11 and Matthew 18:10 to support this characterization.[48] And given that God has entrusted the governing of the world to His angels, this ministry includes humanity, for whom the angels function as guardians in addition to governors. That they are sent by God establishes their office, and they are tasked with protecting the nations of Israel and Judah, as Zechariah writes in 1:10.[49]

But it is the people of God who are the most well-defended. In commenting on 9:8,[50] Luther is first drawn towards the similarities in that passage with Psalm 34:7,[51]

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[46] Verses 8-9: "In the night I saw a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen; and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. Then I said, 'What are these, my lord?' The angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.'" (NRSV)

[47] Which is not a text Luther deals with in his 1517 *Lectures* on that book, interestingly enough. "Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels." (NRSV)

[48] LW 20.16; WA 13.558: "Equites haud dubie sunt angeli, per quos administrat deus hunc mundum visibilem, id quod patet ex epistola ad Hebraeos : non enim angelis subiecit deus orbem terrae futurum, de quo loquimur, q. d. hunc visibilem orbem subiecit eis, dum fecit eos ministratorios spiritus, ad Hebr. 1. Item: angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis. Et Christus ait: angeli eorum semper vident faciem patris vestri etc."

[49] "So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, 'They are those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.'" (NRSV) LW 20.17; WA 13.559: "Ut Haec est ostensio visionis, q. d. metuitis valde, pusillanimes estis, conterriti ferocia adversariarum gentium, non urgetis institutum opus domus domini, vim et arma vicinarum gentium timetis, sed confidite: sublata est omnium malorum omnis occasio, dominus enim vestri curam habet, misit pro vobis angelos, qui visunt terram, quorum ministerio utitur dominus in administrandis omnibus regnis, sunt enim administratorii spiritus. Adeo scil. non sumus derelicti, ut praesides et praefecti orbis terrarum angeli mittantur exploratum. Ista enim vis est in verbo, misit eos dominus, ut significet officium eorum nempe curaturos esse, ne quid adversi accidat Israheli et Iudae ab illis totius orbis terrarum gentibus, quas antea habuerant omnium invisissimas."

[50] "Then I will encamp at my house as a guard, so that no one shall march to and fro; no oppressor shall again overrun them, for now I have seen with my own eyes." (NRSV)

which describes the angels encamping themselves around the godly. In the same way, Zechariah is describing the way the church is defended — not only by the angels, but also by the human clergy — against oppression and harassment. These brave souls battle against the activities of the devil, "as much for their hearers as for the Word."[52] This is the same Word that the angel commands Zechariah to preach in 1:14,[53] showing how the angels support humanity in the exercising of the pastoral office.[54]

In the 1527 *Lectures*, however, Luther's focus is clearly on how the angels serve as preservers and maintainers of God's order in Creation. In fact, he goes so far as to write that God actually governs Creation through the work of the angels – "though of course He does everything by Himself."[55] Janz, of course, highlighted this last phrase in his entry[56] — but does not acknowledge the relevance and importance of the first half of the sentence. Luther describes the governance of creation as occupying four 'tiers.' On the first tier is God. God works alone, governing certain things – such as creating and

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[51] "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them." (NRSV)
[52] LW 20.93; WA 13.625: "In hebraeo est: castra ponam. Eadem vox est in psalmo: immittet angelos suos in circuitu timentium eum, hoc est, per modum exercitus cingit angelorum tutela pios homines facitque angelos custodes eorum, ne qua parte laedi possint. Eadem phrasis hic quoque est, q. d. egregie muniam ecclesiam illam, quam mihi congregavi ex gentibus et Iudaeis, ut non transeat amplius super eam exactor, ut non amplius infestentur pii ab exactore, hoc est legislatore, sed spiritu regentur et ducentur. Dabo itaque sedulos et vigilantes epistolos ac praecones verbi, qui suo munere egregie fungentes servabunt creditam sibi gregem, ne impetum in eam faciant lupi, ne grassentur pseudodoctores in eam et dispergant perdantque animas. Sic, qui praesunt ministerio verbi, illi sunt milites Christi, qui eunt, disseminant verbum et contra sathanam assidue militant tam pro auditoribus quam pro verbo, siquidem sathan nunquam non circumit quaerens, quem devoret, ut inquit Petrus, et per exactores, hoc est, operum et iustitiae humanae doctores avocet a Christo etc."
[53] "So the angel who talked with me said to me, Proclaim this message: Thus says the Lord of hosts; I am very jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion." (NRSV)
[54] LW 20.18; WA 13.561: "Mandatur prophetae, ut referat ad populum amplissimas istas consolationes. Verbum clamare, ut hic accipitur, proprie verti debet verbo praedicare, ut officium significetur, nam frequens est etiam hoc verbum in Mose."
[55] LW 20.169; WA 23.511: "Dieser text ym Sacharja ist nu der sprueche einer, daraus man lernet, wie Gott die welt durch die Engel regiret, So er doch alles selbst alleine durch sich thut."
[56] Janz, "Angels," 6.

multiplying, preservation, and bestowal of power – through His own pure and solitary power.[57]

The second tier is comprised by the angels. God places what He has created into their hands:

> … so that these [angels] might lead, guide, preserve, guard, and help these creatures, and especially us men, from without. For from within the One God alone preserves and helps. But while the angels, to be sure, do not help from within, as God does, they nevertheless do their part from without by inspiring men with good, useful, or necessary thoughts and by keeping or removing evil, harmful thoughts from them. In this way they help to preserve and improve men and creatures outwardly, which God alone does inwardly.[58]

Note that here, we find what sounds to be an echo of Aquinas,[59] in the way Luther describes the means by which the angels are capable of influencing humanity. Still, the larger point here is that Luther believes that the angels are intensely concerned with humanity, specifically in the exercising their office to counsel and protect each individual person. They work to assist, to plead, and to care for everyone – all of which they do while remaining invisible and unnoticed. Luther even claims that every person has an angel, whether that person is an emperor or a peasant – and whether he or she is a Christian or not.[60] "Thus it is with all men when they escape misfortune or have good fortune: it is all the work of God and the angels."[61]

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[57] LW 20.169; WA 23.512: "Denn Gott hat vierley regiment angericht: Eins das er selbst fur sich thut on mit wirckung der Creaturn, das gehet gantz und gar durch seine macht alleine, als wenn er die Creaturn schafft und mehret, erhelt und mancherley krafft und art yhn gibt, Hiezu hilfft yhm niemand."

[58] LW 20.170; WA 23.512: "Das ander ist, wenn er solche geschaffene und erhaltene Creaturn den Engeln befilhet, das sie von aussen zu die selbigen furen, leiten, bewaren, hueten und helffen, Und sonderlich die menschen, Denn von ynnwendig erhelt und hilfft alleine der einige Gott. Ob nu wol die lieben Engel nicht von ynnwendig helffen, wie Gott thut, So thun sie doch von aussen das yhr dazu, als das sie den menschen gute, nuetzliche odder noetige gedancken eingeben Und hindern odder weg nemen boese, schedliche gedancken, damit sie helffen, die leute und Creaturn eusserlich erhalten und bessern, welchs Gott selbst ynnwendig thut alleine."

[59] In *Summa Theologiae* I.111, as noted above.

[60] LW 20.170-1; WA 23.512: "Solchs und der gleichen offenbarung der Engeln zeiget an, wie sie on unterlas so mit uns thun, unsichtbarlich und verborgen, das yhr ampt sey, den menschen helffen und radten,

The third tier of rule is that which God exercises through humanity, specifically "apostles and preachers." Luther wants to make sure that the reader understands that God could teach the Gospel internally and without preaching – but instead chooses to make use of human preachers to pass on the Word and teach the Spirit, which is granted to them internally. Through these people – and their fellow assistants, the angels – God offers salvation. And most importantly, God wishes that this office of ministry be respected and revered, because it is, "His work and that of His angels and messengers."[62]

Interestingly, in this passage, he also notes (in an aside) that God does "inwardly" preserve and rule all creatures through the angels. Does Luther here contradict himself? No, what is more likely is that we are here seeing a bit of the breakdown of language that comes when we try to use spatial metaphors when relational ones are more appropriate. Luther has been clear that God's main 'tools' of governance and preservation are the angels, so it only makes sense that he would maintain that stance here. When he speaks of 'internal' motivation that comes from God while discussing the 'second tier' of governance, we can best understand Luther as meaning God touching the deepest part of the human person and working *from within* that place;[63] in fact, God inhabits that place in

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foddern und bessern, auch fur uns bitten und sorgen. Also hat ein iglicher Keyser, Koenig, Fuerst, herr, ja ein iglicher mensch seinen Engel, es sey der Keyser odder sein keyserthum Christen odder nicht."

[61] LW 20.170; WA 23.512: "Also gehets mit allen menschen, wo sie dem unglueck entgehen odder glueck haben: Es sind alles Gotts und der Engel werck."

[62] LW 20.171; WA 23.513: "Das dritte regiment ist, das Gott durch menschen furet, als durch die Apostel und prediger. Denn wie wol Gott kuende on predigen die leute das Euangelion leren, wie er denn auch thut ynnwendig (gleich wie er on Engel alle creaturn ynnwendig erhelt und regirt), So wil ers doch nicht thun, Sondern braucht der prediger eusserlich durchs wort und lest sie mit wercken zur lere und geyst, den er selbst ynnwendig gibt. Also rhuemet sich S. Paulus .1. Cor. 3. das die prediger seyen Gottes gehuelffen und mitwircker an der Corinther selickeit, Und 2. Corin. 6. spricht: 'Wir helffen aber mit und vermanen euch etc.' Also auch durch die Engel, als durch mit wircker und seine gehuelffen, hilfft und rettet er alle menschen und wil nicht leren on die prediger, auch nicht helffen on die Engel. Derhalben wil Gott das predigampt und alle oeberkeit geehret haben, Denn es sind seine und seiner Engel und seiner boten werck."

[63] The irony of needing to use spatial metaphors to make this point has not been lost on me.

a way that is entirely unique to God.[64] By contrast, the angels communicate in a manner that is *directed to* the inner person while still remaining separate (external) to it.

The fourth tier of rule is through secular government, which includes the home and family.[65] This tier Luther categorizes as another instance of "outward rule," alongside the clergy and the angels. But there is also an "outward means" at each level of the three lower tiers, through which what is ultimately God's rule is exercised: the sword, the Word, and reason. The "sword" can be best described as everything that is inherent in secular rulership, such as laws, customs, stations, bureaucracy, and so forth. The Word is comprised by spiritual gifts (such as the ones named in I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, Romans 12), sacraments, etc. And by reason, what Luther means is, "everything that the dear angels use to move us and keep us from evil and to further our welfare." And while there is an interconnectedness between these three "outward" rules and the means by which they accomplish their tasks, Luther is careful to delineate exactly how each tier uses its tool.[66]

The angels have the capability to use all three: sword, Word, and reason. But the Church is incapable of using reason (at least, according to the definition that Luther is using in this passage), and chooses not to use the sword, but instead exercises its office

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[64] The topic of deification and union with God as it appears in Luther's writings is outside of the scope of this dissertation — but is also seeing a great deal of discussion. Two excellent starting points leap to mind: Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Eerdmans, 1998), and Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present In Faith: Luther's View Of Justification* (Fortress Press, 2005).

[65] LW 20.171; WA 23.513: "Das vierde ist das weltliche regiment, darynnen begriffen ist das haus regiment und der eltern gewalt uber die kinder."

[66] LW 20.172; WA 23.513-4: "So hat er nu dreyerley eusserliche regiment und dreyerley eusserliche weise odder mittel dazu uber sein selbst eigen Gottlich regiment. Im weltlichen regiment ist das schwerd und die faust, Im geistlichen ist das wort und der mund, Im Engelischen ist der verstand und vernunfft. Das sind die drey weise: Schwerd, Wort, Verstand. Durchs schwerd aber verstehe ich alles was zum weltlichen regiment gehoert, als weltliche rechte und gesetze, sitten und gewonheite, geberden, stende, unterscheidene empter, person, kleider, etc., Durchs wort alles was zum geistlichen regiment gehoert, als die geistlichen Empter .1. Cor. xij, Ephe. iiij. Ro xij. und die sacrament und der gleichen, Durch den verstand alles was die lieben Engel brauchen, damit sie uns bewegen und hindern vom boesen odder foddern zum guten …"

through the Word. The secular government is able to use only the sword. These capabilities also ensure that each tier cannot impede the work of those above it; however, each tier – should it choose to do so – could contribute to the work of those that are beneath it. The sword serves the others by keeping peace among the people, so that the Word can be preached. In return, the Gospel works to teach the people respect for the sword as a divinely-instituted tool and to remain obedient to those who exercise it. The angels serve both orders by advocating each of them and by "moving the people through reason." Both the sword and the Word reciprocate by working to provide an environment in which the angels may more easily approach the people and foster the angelic rule of, and through, reason.[67]

In the same vein, Luther shows how he understands the angels to advocate both the sword and the Word, in his thoughts on Zechariah 3:7.[68] Luther says that according to that passage, God has promised that when He places someone in power, He will also ensure that that leader has subjects who will obey him or her. Specifically, the angels will be present, "and they shall see to it that they keep you in the rule and your followers in

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[67] LW 20.172; WA 23.514: "Denn sie regirn nicht mit dem schwerd noch mit dem wort, wie wol sie es thun konnen, Widderumb die geistlichen konnen nicht mit dem verstand, wie die Engel, regirn, So regirn sie nicht mit dem schwerd, wie wol sie es auch thun konnen, sondern mit dem wort, Die weltlichen konnen nicht mit verstand, wie die Engel, noch mit dem wort, wie die geistlichen, regirn, sondern regirn mit dem schwerd. Also hat ein iglichs sein bescheiden werck und mas, Das die untersten konnen nicht der obersten ampt furen, Aber die obersten wol der untersten … Und dieser dreyer regiment ist keins widder das ander und keins zubricht odder zurstoeret das ander, sondern eins dienet dem andern. Das unterste, des schwerds regiment, dienet dem Euangelio damit, das es friede helt unter den leuten, On welchen man nicht kundte predigen, Widderumb das Euangelion dienet dem schwerd damit, das es leret und die leute zum gehorsam des schwerds helt und bezeuget, das das schwerd Gotts ordnung und regiment sey, drumb es zu furchten und zu ehren sey, On welche furcht und ehre das schwerd gar ein unseligs elends regiment were. Also auch dienen die Engel beyde dem Euangelio und schwerd, damit das sie es helffen treiben und die leute mit verstand dazu bewegen, Widderumb schwerd und wort dienen den Engeln, denn sie machen raum und bereiten die leute durch fride und predigt, das die Engel konnen deste bas dazu komen und yhr regiment treyben, Denn ynn unfride und ynn yrthum haben die Engel nicht gut regieren mit yhrem verstande."

[68] "'Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here." (NRSV)

obedience."[69] Luther goes on to emphasize that obedience and security of office is a gift from God, preserved by the angels in their work of preventing the rebellion and disobedience that occurs when the Devil is exercising his influence in humanity. And conversely, when rebellion and disobedience do occur, this is due to God's punishment, as carried out by the angels – who relax their vigil and allow the Devil a greater amount of freedom.[70] But note also that here Luther is talking about rulership not only in the secular realm, but within the church as well. In this section, he is speaking from the viewpoint of Joshua, whom he imagines would be concerned when confronted with the reality of being entrusted with the spiritual and physical wellbeing of his people. Why should he succeed, Luther imagines him as thinking, when Moses and Aaron – to whom Joshua considers himself to be inferior – did not? Thus God has promised that the angels will maintain order in both cases, at God's command.

III.3. 1536-1545

Outside of Luther's *Lectures on Genesis* (which we will address in a moment), in this period, we actually do not find much discussion of angels and their role in Creation.

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[69] LW 20.214; WA 23.551: "Die ander verheissunge ist, das er yhm wil auch gehorsame unterthanen geben, Denn wo oberkeit ist on gehorsam, da ist eitel unordnung und nichts werd. Und ist auch Josua wol von noeten, Denn das Judissche volck ein hochmuetig halstarrig volck war, das Josua wol sich mocht besorgen und sagen: Du befilhest mir das geistliche regiment zu dieser elenden zeit. Wie, wenn mirs also gienge, das die andern nicht gleubten und wolt ein iglicher sich rhuemen, es were yhm befolhen? Kundts doch Mose und Aaron nicht erhalten, Es stund Cora und die besten vom stam Levi widder sie auff, wie viel mehr wird mirs so gehen, der ich viel geringer bin denn Mose und Aaron? Darauff gehet diese verheissung und spricht: furcht dich nicht, Ich, der dir das ampt befelhe, wil dir auch unterthenige geben, die dir folgen und sich nicht widder dich setzen noch empoeren sollen, Denn ich wil meine engel da bey haben, die drauff sehen sollen, das sie dich ym regiment und jhene ym gehorsam halten."

[70] LW 20.215; WA 23.551: "Aus diesem spruch haben wir, das eitel gnade und gabe Gotts ist, wo frume gehorsamen unterthanen sind, und das solchs Gott durch seine engel ynn der welt verschaffe und erhalte widder den auffrur und ungehorsam, so ynn aller menschen hertzen steckt und durch den teufel angeregt wird, Das kein zweivel ist, wo ungehorsam und auffrur ist, das der teufel da den zaun los gewonnen hat und die engel ablassen zu hueten, damit Gott straffe, die es verdienen."

He does not mention angels as messengers or as preachers at this time, reserving his thoughts for discussion of angels as preservers of God's order.

III.3.1 Preservers

Again echoing his earlier thoughts, Luther posits several tiers of organization in creation, but configures them a bit differently. In his 1539 St. Michael's Day sermon, he preaches that the angelic hierarchy is above all others. Then, starting from the lowest, on earth there is the divinely-ordained rule of the parents over their household. Above them is governmental/secular authority, which protects its people from murderers and other criminals. And highest on earth is the authority of the church, which preaches and absolves. Then, at the top, are the angels, who order and administer these others as they themselves protect, order, and administer their own charges. While God is certainly capable of governing all of these levels without the angels' assistance, God does not wish to do so. Instead, God wants to put the angels to use, to help rule the church, the world, and the family.[71] Here we have obvious interaction between the angels and the "three estates," yet this fact goes unmentioned by those authors who have written on the subject, such as Bayer and Lohse.

As to how the angels themselves are organized, Luther did comment in a sermon from November 1537, in which he continues to remain consistent with his thoughts on the matter. Though he acknowledges that tradition names nine choirs of angels, and that

[71] "Predigt am Michaelistage." WA 47.854: "**Uber das hat er noch ein hoher regiment**, quod est Angelica Hierarchia. **Hausregiment**, ut parentes, **ist** divina administratio, **ist das niderste**, postea **herrschafft ist hoher, schutzet und wehret** homicidis, postea **das hochst** in mundo, quod praedicas, absolvis. Supra hoc habent etiam Angeli **ein regiment**. Hi ad hoc ordinati, ut ista tria regimina **handhaben, schutzen und schirmen**. Parentes sunt **quell und born**, ex quo venit **weltlich regiment**. Postea ex his **kirchen regiment**. Sic **das hochste regiment schutzet das geringer**. Civile regnum **schutzet hausregiment**. **Kirchen regiment** docet omnes homines omnium statuum. Supra haec administratio Angelorum, qui defendunt et administrant omnia ista tria. Posset sine Angelis gubernare, sed non vult: vult ipsis uti, ut **helffen regieren** Ecclesiam, **weltlich und hausregiment."**

the angelic kingdom and the earthly kingdom are similarly organized, he is not as sure about the specifics. But he does think that there are ways to distinguish between the ranks of angels, dependent on their different natures, so that angels of a superior nature are above those of an inferior nature, and thus there are dominions, thrones, and the like.[72]

But Luther also wishes to emphasize humanity's participation alongside the angels in the larger scheme of the maintenance and sustaining of God's order. In his lesson given on the Sunday after Easter, Luther says:

> Christ rules direct and effectually, in his own power, through the Word and through the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, maintaining them in the faith and in the knowledge of his Word, and protecting from the devil's wrath and subtlety; further, he rules through his angels, who guard his followers; again, he rules through his people themselves, who exercise authority over one another in loving service, each teaching, instructing, comforting and admonishing a noble little band of godly, obedient, patient, chaste, kind, tractable, benevolent souls.[73]

III.3.2. Protectors

Regarding angels as protectors, however, Luther does make interesting comments in a 1540 sermon. On the Vigil of the Circumcision that year, Luther says that this angelic protection and benefit extend to all people — even to non-Christians. But he also in this sermon mentions that he himself is aware of the times in his life when he had experienced angelic protection, though he does not describe any specific occurrences —

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[72] "Predigt am Mittwoch nach Elisabeth." WA 45.290: "Hoc intelligi potest de duplici regno hominum et angelorum. Vocaverunt hinc 9 choros in celo. **Da weis ich nicht drumb,** nec ego nec illi **drinn**. Tamen credo discerni inter angelos, **das etlich** secundum naturam **hoher geschaffen** quam alii, **das grost ding als thron, stuel, herschafft**."

[73] Church Postils 7.235; "Am Sontag nach Ostern. Epistel I. Johan. V." WA 21.279: "Wie nu diese beiderley Reich regieret werden, das ist offenbar und nicht verborgen, one das wir die beide Heubter, den HErrn Christum und den Teuffel nicht sehen, Denn Christus regieret selbs mit eigener krafft und macht gewaltiglich durchs Wort und heiligen Geist in den hertzen seiner gleubigen, erhelt und schuetzet sie bey dem Glauben und erkentnis seines Worts wider des Teuffels zorn und list, dazu durch seine Engel, die sie bewaren, und sie selbs unternander durch jren dienst und werck der Liebe, da einer den andern leret, unterrichtet, troestet, vermanet etc. und hat in seinem heufflin feine, frome, gehorsame, gedultige, keusche, freundliche, milde und gutthetige Leute."

one of the few times he makes reference to any sort of personal connection to the angels. However, he does recount a story regarding a small child from Voigtland, who had become lost while chasing after some sheep. She had been found three days later, unharmed even though it was winter. "For when children at times fall from a table, or bench, or into the fire, it is manifest to an observer that the angels are there, protecting them." Even Jesus Christ, as a child, experienced for Himself the same angelic protection as would any other child.[74]

III.3.3. *Lectures on Genesis*

In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther does discuss each of the angelic roles. We will begin with his thoughts on angels as messengers.

III.3.3.1. Messengers and Preachers

According to Luther, the angels act so completely and perfectly as messengers, as mouthpieces for the Word of God that questions of "who is speaking (at this point in the text)?" begin to break down. As he says in his comments on Genesis 18, in Genesis as a whole, Moses often attributes speech to God when one could just as easily attribute that speech to someone else. In the case of Genesis 18, one could argue that the angels were doing the speaking. However, Moses instead attributes the speech to God, "For the angels

[74] House Postils 3.262-3; WA 49.189: "Sed **lesst mit im umbgehen** ut cum aliis. **Manchs kind felt vom tisch ins feur, das man offentlich sihet,** quod angelus hic. **Jm voitland** ante 6 annos emissus puer, ut quaereret pecudes et domum **&c. ein meydlin,** die inveniunt sedentem in sylva &c.. **Das thut engel** non solum Christianis, sed etiam **heiden**. Hinc dicitur: **Hast heut ein guten Engel gehabt. Thut mancher fall, sol den hals 3 mal brechen,** et tamen non. Econtra in via sol **ein bein brechen,** quia angelus **nicht da.** Si etro respicio vitam meam, habui 3 angelos **gehabt.**" Although it is not the exact instance he is talking about, we find an example of the sort of protection he means, in his Feb. 10, 1546, letter to his wife: "For several days little pieces of plaster were drifting down from overhead in our private quarters, and when we summoned help and the ceiling was examined, a stone fell down which was as long as a large pillow and more than a hand's breadth wide. Think of what might have happened as a result of your blessed worrying if the dear angels had not intervened!" From Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1955), 107. WA 11.291.

who were sent by God did not bring their own word; they brought the Word of God."[75] Luther writes that this conclusion is supported throughout Scripture, which often states that God is doing the speaking whenever holy men or angels communicate the "command" or "revelation" of God.[76] This communication does not simply end at speech, however. Luther also writes that all good deeds — whether accomplished by human or angel — ultimately come from God, and it is to God that one should give credit.[77] God chooses to communicate through angels and human beings, says Luther, because God wishes to govern Creation through them, as God's servants. Thus, though the Word has been "instituted by divine authority for salvation," when spoken by a human, it simultaneously remains a human word.[78] Yes, revelation could come through an angel or even directly from God Godself, but the human ministry should also be credited when one can be sure that God has spoken through it. "The Word of God is truly the Word of God even when it is uttered by a human being."[79]

Luther also distinguishes between kinds of divine appearances: those that take place in dreams, and those that take place in the visible world. In this way, God can 'appear' when speaking through human priests, such as Shem or Eber. However, when the Bible states that God appeared, but does not add anything further (as it does in Genesis 26:2), [80]

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[75] LW 3.219; WA 43.31: "… quia divinitus missi Angeli non suum, sed Dei verbum afferebant."
[76] LW 3.219; WA 43.32: "Ego sequor primum scripturae autoritatem, quae Deum loqui dicit, cum loquuntur vel Angeli, vel sancti homines ex Dei vel mandato, vel revelatione."
[77] LW 3.272; WA 43.69: "Generalis enim hic Canon est, ut sive per homines, sive per Angelos aliquid boni fiat, a Domino id factum statuas, eique acceptum referas."
[78] LW 3.273; WA 43.71: "Sic verbum vocale est quidem vox hominis, sed authoritate divina instituta ad salutem. Vult enim Deus gubernare mundum per Angelos et homines, creaturas suas, tanquam per sua ministeria …"
[79] LW 2.82; WA 42.320: "Quanquam enim non negem potuisse fieri, ut per Angelum haec revelarentur aut per ipsum Spiritum sanctum, Tamen, ubi commode dici potest, quod per homines Deus sit locutus, ibi ministerium honorandum est. Sic multa, quae Deum Moses locutum dixit, nos supra per Adamum dicta esse ostendimus. Nam verbum Dei etiam cum ab homine pronunciatur, vere est verbum Dei."
[80] "The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt; settle in the land that I shall show you." (NRSV)

one should understand such an appearance as taking place in physical reality. In these cases, according to Luther, the appearance is an angel, who took on human form, just as they did in Genesis 18 when appearing to Abraham.[81]

Luther finds an occurrence of this manner of divine appearance in Genesis 3:9, when God calls to Adam in the Garden. According to him, "some" have wondered about who it was, exactly, that called to Adam. That it was an angel speaking as God's representative is a perfectly reasonable conclusion, says Luther. But he goes on to connect this idea of representation to human government as well, saying that when those people act or speak, they are doing so in God's name. And thus for him, the Bible attributes the judgments made or enforced through human agency to God.[82]

Having characterized them as carriers of God's Word, Luther also discusses their second role in creation — as ministers. And once again, he highlights the events of the house of Abraham to illustrate this point.

When the three angels visited him at the Oaks of Mamre in Genesis 18, Abraham saw three men — but men who had the Word of God, and thus he worshipped them as God. Luther here links having the Word of God explicitly to the ministry: "… it is the same as if it stated: 'Abraham listened to and looked upon this third angel as upon God, because he knew that this angel had the Word of God.' These words have reference to the

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[81] LW 5.20; WA 43.442: "Postremo de apparitione divina dicendum est. Duplex est apparitio in sacris literis. In somnis et in specie sive visibili forma aut figura. Apparere etiam dicitur, si sit locutus per Sem aut Eber, qui tum vixerunt, et fuerunt summi sacerdotes. Quia vero hic nihil additur. Sed absolute dicitur: 'Apparuit': intelligitur apparitio non in somnis facta, sed in forma visibili, hoc est, fuit Angelus, qui apparuit in specie humana. Sicut ad beatam virginem, Petrum et ad Abraham supra capite 18. venerunt Angeli."

[82] LW 1.173; WA 42.129: "Queritur autem hic de persona, per quam vocatus sit Adam. Ac non absurdum est Deum ista omnia gessisse per ministerium Angelorum et Angelum egisse vices Dei ac in persona Dei cum Adamo ista locutum esse. Sicut magistratus cum aliquid vel faciunt vel dicunt, non id faciunt nec dicunt in sua persona, sed Dei. Ideo scriptura vocat iudicium Dei iudicia, quae exercentur seu administrantur per homines. Non igitur mihi displicet, per Angelum vocatum esse Adamum et ostensum ei, quod fuga esset impossibilis."

high office of the ministry…", with which the patriarchs were familiar, and happy to support.[83] But the connection flows the other way as well: not only can angels act as ministers, but ministers act as angels to each other. God, says Luther, appeared to the patriarchs in many ways: in dreams, visions, through the words of the patriarchs or through angels. Again, he does not particularly want such appearances for himself:

> … we are satisfied, and we thank God to the best of our ability for our own appearances and faces of God, which we behold in Baptism and the entire ministry of the Word. It is there that a brother becomes an angel for his brother. He absolves him from sins, comforts, instructs, strengthens, warns, admonishes, etc.[84]

By describing the human ministers as angels, and then offering those deeds as descriptions, we can conclude that Luther believed such deeds to be part of the angels' ministry as well.

This conclusion is further borne out by considering what Luther says about the interactions between Hagar and the angel in Genesis 16 and Genesis 21. In Genesis 21, Hagar has been cast out of Abraham's home and has taken Ishmael with her. They became lost in the desert and despaired. The angel heard them and came to help. What is interesting about their interaction is that Luther places the experience into terms of excommunication; that is, Hagar and Ishmael were not just cast out of Abraham's house,

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[83] LW 3.232; WA 43.41: "Tertius Angelus substitit, eum, sicut alios duos, Abraham iudicavit esse hominem, sed talem, in quo esset Dei spiritus. Videbat enim, quod haberet verbum Dei, et iudicabat, non hominis: sed Dei verbum eum loqui. Ideo etiam ut Deum eum adorat. Quod igitur textus dicit: 'Stabat coram DOMINO', idem est, ac si dicat: Audiebat intuebatur illum tertium Angelum Abraham ceu Deum, quia norat eum habere verbum Dei. Pertinent igitur haec ad ministerii dignitatem, quod, cum adhuc obscurum quasi esset, tanto studio exceperunt sancti Patriarchae: Nos in summa luce etiam contumelias, imo quoque gladium et famem addimus, qua enecamus Euangelii ministros. Nunc orationem Abrahae audiamus, quae sane horribilis est, si eventum respicias."

[84] LW 3.167; WA 42.667: "Patriarchis et Prophetis Deus singulariter apparuit, sive in somnis, sive in visione, seu per Patriarcharum, nonnunquam etiam Angelorum vocem. Tales revelationes seu apparitiones nos non desideramus, sed sumus contenti, ac Deo gratias, quam possumus maximas, agimus pro nostris apparitionibus et faciebus Dei, quas videmus in Baptismo et toto verbi ministerio. Ibi enim frater frati fit Angelus: absolvit eum a peccatis, consolatur, instruit, munit, monet, exhortatur etc."

but out of his church.[85] Therefore, Luther writes that when the angel appears, part of what he accomplishes is to welcome Hagar (and by extension, Ishmael) back into the church: "Thus he absolves the troubled woman from all excommunication and fear. He receives her again into grace and into participation in the promise of Isaac, and at the same time he leaves her the freedom of going where she wishes."[86]

In Genesis 16, Hagar flees from Abraham's household after harsh treatment by Sarah. While in the desert, she is visited by an angel, who brings her the promise of God. Hagar, says Luther, was not frightened by such an experience because she had learned from Abraham that "human affairs are directed through the ministry of the angels."[87] More significant, however, is the comment Luther makes during his exegesis of Genesis 17:1:

> The angel not only persuades Ishmael's mother, who was impatient of the yoke of her mistress and was a fugitive, to return and submit to her; but, when she was frightened by the Law and acknowledged her sins, he also buoyed her up with the promise and brought her to the true knowledge of God. As a result, she believed that God had her in His care and had regard for her. Through this faith she was sanctified and absolved of her sins.[88]

What we see in these two passages is that, according to Luther, not only does the angel absolve Hagar from fear and excommunication from the church of Abraham, but also, by

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[85] LW 4.42: "… Ishmael is cast out of the house and the church of Abraham, nevertheless, as I have stated more than once above, undoubtedly many of the Canaanites were converted to the church. … For the expulsion does not mean that Ishmael should be utterly excluded from the kingdom of God." WA 43.165: "Etsi autem ex domo et Ecclesia Abrahae eiicitur Ismael, tamen, ut supra aliquoties dixi, quod haud dubie multi ex Cainitis ad Ecclesiam conversi sunt, ita non dubito, quin Ismael et multi ex posteris ad veram Abrahami Ecclesiam conversi sint: non enim hoc agitur, ut simpliciter excludatur a regno Dei …" Also, LW 4.48: "… Hagar is being tried not only by her physical expulsion but also by her spiritual one …" WA 43.169: "Non igitur tentatur Hagar tantum eiectione corporali, sed etiam spirituali …"

[86] LW 4.65; WA 43.182: "Sic absolvit turbatam foeminam ab omni excommunicatione et metu, recipiens eam in gratiam et communionem promissionis Isaac, et relinquit simul libertatem eundi, quo velit."

[87] LW 3.62; WA 42.592: "Quia enim longo tempore in domo sancti Patriarchae vixit, saepe ex eo audivit, gubernari humana per ministerium Angelorum."

[88] LW 3.75; WA 42.601: "… qui matrem eius Hagar, impatientem herilis iugi et profugientem non solum persuasit, ut rediret, ac se submitteret dominae suae Hagar: sed etiam territam lege, et agnoscentem peccata promissione iterum erexit, et perduxit eam ad veram Dei notitiam, ut crederet se Deo curae esse, et respici a Deo, qua fide sanctificata et a peccatis iustificata est.

raising her spirits and reminding her of God's promise, it enables Hagar to be absolved of her sins and sanctified.

III.3.3.2. Preservers

Before we delve into the ways in which angels work to preserve God's order in Creation as Luther describes them in his *Lectures*, we should first unpack a statement that Luther makes during his comments on Genesis 19: "This [the scholastics] call God's 'ordered' power, namely, when He makes use of the service either of angels or of human beings."[89]

Luther is drawing a contrast here between God's 'absolute' power (*potestas absoluta*) and God's 'ordered' power (*potestas ordinata*).[90] In order to understand what he means, we can look at his discussion of God's rest on the seventh day of creation in Genesis 2:2. There, Luther explains that while God was satisfied with God's creation and ceased from continuing the process at that point (what he terms 'establishing'), God still remains connected to creation through God's Word. This Word continues the process of preservation and governance of the entirety of Creation.[91] What Luther is saying in the opening comment of this section, therefore, is that while God remains capable of

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[89] LW 3.274; WA 43.71: "Hanc vocant Dei ordinatam potestatem, cum scilicet utitur ministerio vel Angelorum vel hominum."

[90] Luther reveals his medieval nominalistic training by placing his argument in these terms. As Heiko Oberman summarises, Gabriel Biel also used these terms when discussing God's exercising of God's power. Oberman writes, "… God [does] not act sometimes with, sometimes without order – this would contradict God's very being. But the distinction should be understood to mean that God can – and, in fact, has chosen to – do certain things according to the laws which he freely established, that is, *de potentia ordinata*. On the other hand, God can do everything that does not imply contradiction, whether God has decided to these things [*de potentia ordinata*] or not, as there are many things God can do which he does not want to do. The latter is called God's power *de potentia absoluta.*" Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 37.

[91] LW 1.75; WA 42.57: "Facilis itaque est solutio. Quievit Deus ab opere suo, hoc est, contentus fuit illo coelo et terra tum condita per verbum, non creavit novos coelos, non novam terram, non novas stellas, non arbores novas. Et tamen operatur Deus adhuc, si quidem semel conditam naturam non deseruit, sed gubernat et conservat virtute verbi sui. Cessavit igitur a conditione, sed non cessavit a gubernatione."

exercising God's 'extraordinary' power (Luther's term; *extraordinariam*), God instead exercises God's 'ordered' power through the angels and through humanity.[92]

Luther's thoughts here speak directly to those who would deemphasize the angels' role in Creation by attributing that which they do ultimately to God. In one sense, Janz and those who agree with him are correct: given that God is the source of everything as its 'establisher,' God does 'do' everything; Luther argues this point explicitly in his *Lectures on Zechariah* and implicitly here. Nevertheless, their argument confuses the difference between the formal cause and the efficient cause of an event by collapsing the one into the other. By saying that God is the only cause (and that Luther argues that as well), they negate the role of the angels as God's instruments — a role that Luther explicitly endorses as one of the means by which God express God's 'ordered' power in Creation.

Thus, the angels are instruments of God's created order, dedicated to preservation, maintenance, and governance. And as Luther elaborates, this work can take many forms. From his comments on Genesis 19, we also learn that the storm that struck Sodom and Gomorrah was "brought on through the instrumentality of the angels." This storm had all of the common characteristics of a violent storm – lightning, thunder, winds, rain, even sulfurous smells. But Luther highlights a different characteristic as the most important: this storm was not a random or accidental occurrence. As is true for all other storms, this storm was the work of the angels.[93] Not all facets of the natural world fall under the

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[92] Extremely similar to his conclusions in his 1527 *Lectures on Zechariah*.

[93] LW 3.295; WA 43.86: "Pluendi verbo utitur Moses, ut ostendat tempestatem per ministerium Angelorum excitatam fuisse. Quae autem in tempestatibus fere concurrant, Nimbi, turbines, tonitrua, fulgura, fulmina, terraemotus rationi notum est. Sulphuris quoque meminit, quia ignis a tempestatibus excitatus semper sulphureus est, et tacta coelesti igni etiam odorem Sulphuris habent. Cum magno igitur fragore et sonitu delapsus ignis devoravit civitates. Memineris autem Angelorum hoc opus esse, nec, ut gentes iudicant, fortuito talia fieri."

angels' purview, however. In contrast to the previous tradition, Luther did not believe that angels governed the motion of the planets. Such work is God's, he says, as the angels are incapable of doing it.[94] That said, the angels are in charge of most everything else, particularly when it comes to human life and experience. In his comments on Genesis 24, Luther says:

> Therefore let us learn that our best and most steadfast friends are invisible, namely the angels, who in their faithfulness, goodwill, and friendly services far surpass our visible friends, just as the invisible wicked angels and devils are enemies more dangerous than those who are visible. Whatever mischief is done springs from the former rather than the latter, whom we see with our eyes. On the other hand, if anything good happens, it is performed entirely by the good angels.[95]

One significant fact of God's order in Creation is that for each person, God has ordained a particular purpose and particular end — and the angels reinforce that order by supporting people as they walk their paths. Thus, for believers, part of living the godly life is by conforming to the calling which God has given them. In his comments on Genesis 44:17,[96] Luther reminds his audience that each person has this calling — and that each calling has its purpose in the larger scheme of God's order. Every person should thank God for this gift, and remember that so long as one follows this calling, whatever

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[94] LW 1.30; WA 42.23: "… nos secuti Mosen dicimus omnia ista geri et regi simpliciter verbo Dei. Ipse dixit, et factum est. Non mandavit corpora ista regenda Angelis, sicut nec nos ab Angelis gubernamur, quanquam custodimur ab Angelis. Sic quod Planetarum motus est retrogradus, est opus Dei creatum per verbum, quod opus ad ipsum Deum pertinet, et longe maius est, quam ut Angelis possit tribui."

[95] LW 4.256; WA 43.319: Discamus ergo optimos et constantissimos amicos nostros esse invisibiles, Angelos videlicet, qui fide et benevolentia et omnibus offitiis amicitiae longe superant visibiles amicos. Sicut mali Angeli et Diaboli invisibiles infensiores hostes sunt, quam visibiles: quicquid, mali fit, ab illis oritur potius, quam ab iis, quos oculis cernimus: econtra, si quid boni accidit, id totum per bonos Angelos administratur." Note here an echo of his 1527 *Lectures on Isaiah*, referenced in a previous section, where Luther attributes what one could call 'luck' to the angels. We have also seen this idea presented in the 1527 *Lectures on Zechariah*, when Luther is discussing angels as a second tier of order.

[96] "But he said, 'Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the one in whose possession the cup was found shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father.'" (NRSV)

he or she does will please God and the angels, even those activities done in fun.[97] Luther further connects this notion of personal calling with the temptation that Satan offers Christ in Matthew 4:5-8. Using the words of Psalm 91:11-12, which promise angelic protection, Satan conceals his true purpose, which is to tempt Christ into stepping from God's path. But, Luther points out, this promise of angelic protection is contingent on following God's path. Likewise, so long as a person remains committed to following his or her calling, then the angels will serve as guardians for that person — whether that calling comes from God or from a legitimate superior in secular society.[98]

Still, this promise of angelic protection is not a promise that walking the path of one's personal calling will be a constantly blissful experience. Luther is very cognizant that the believer will encounter difficulties. In fact, he writes that these difficulties should impel the believer to offer prayer to God for continued progress. The path of marriage will have its trials, but they can be overcome through prayer "and the angel." Duties in government or in the church should also move the believer to offer a prayer of trust and patience to God, following the example of Abraham's servant in Genesis 24:12-14. This

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[97] LW 7.367; WA 44.573: "Itaque qui pie volunt vivere, timeant Deum, eique confidant et postea vocationi suae obtemperent, tum abunde erit quod agant, commendent Domino viam suam, mane et vesperi, dormiant in nomine Domini, rursus cubitu surgant, et faciant quae ad manus ipsis fuerint in quocunque vitae genere. Sicut inquit Samuel ad Saul: 'Fac quaecunque invenerit manus tua, quia Dominus tecum est'. So mus denn alles wol gethan sein, et erunt omnia tua opera etiam ludicra, Deo et Angelis iucundissima spectacula."

[98] LW 1.107-8; WA 42.81-2: "Sic cum Satan Christum audiret niti fiducia misericordiae Dei in magna fame, conabatur eum ad prohibitam fiduciam, hoc est, ad tentandum Deum inducere. Utebatur sententia Psalmi sibi commoda: 'Mandavit Angelis suis de te, ut portent te in manibus, et non offendas ad lapidem pedem tuum.' Hoc autem, quod contra Satanae institutum erat, quod scilicet custodia haec angelorum esset in viis nostris, seu vocatione nostra, id callide dissimulabat. In eo enim totius argumenti solutio est: Nempe, quod Angeli custodes nostri sunt, sed in nostris viis. Hanc solutionem Christus erudite ostendit, cum opponit praeceptum: 'Non tentabis Dominum Deum tuum'. Significat enim, hominis viam non esse volare in aëre, (ea enim volatilium via est) sed gradus, qui erant de tecto templi ad id facti, ut facilis et sine periculo descensus esset. Cum ergo sumus in vocatione et officio, sive mandato divinitus, sive per homines, qui vocationis legitimum ius habent, ibi credamus praesidium Angelorum non defuturum nobis esse."

prayer should be the starting point of all that one does, says Luther: "… let the beginning of all our affairs be prayer to God and the next the thought of the care of the angels."[99]

III.3.3.3. Protectors

While considering angels as preservers of the created order, we have touched on the notion of protection, in as much as the angels specifically protect those who remain on the path that God has ordained for them. However, we see in the *Lectures on Genesis* that Luther also believed that the angels are tasked with taking what we might term a more 'proactive' stance in protecting not only creation in general, but also humanity in specific.

Sometimes, Luther uses aggressive and militaristic terminology to describe the ways in which angels are organized and work to protect humanity. Even when humanity has been hurt by the devil or by the world, the angels (as well as God Godself) are present to "annihilate our adversaries."[100] Such battles do not take place only within the church or among Christians. In the secular realm as well, good angels fight with bad angels, because all crimes — such as theft, murder, fraud and so on — are the work of the devil, whom the government is incapable of expelling from humanity.[101] Perhaps this inability on humanity's part to escape the predations of the devil might cause one to

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[99] LW 4.265; WA 43.325: "Haec tanta pericula et tam varia excutiant nobis securitatem, et exuscitent ad invocationem, ut occurrat nobis Deus, et det facilem successum omnibus nostris negociis. Coniugii infinita impedimenta et pericula sunt. Sed oratio et Angelus discutiunt, et facilime perrumpunt. Similiter in omnibus functionibus, sive Magistratum geras, sive munus docendi in Ecclesia sustineas, discas orare et petere a Deo exemplo servi huius: fac occurrere: da, ut sponte se offerant omnia. Nec servus id optare aut petere unquam potuisset, nisi fuisset bene edoctus in cognitione et experientia rerum spiritualium et insidiarum Sathanae. Principium ergo omnium negotiorum sit invocatio Dei. Deinde cogitatio de cura Angelorum."

[100] LW 2.265; WA 42.451: "Sed levis haec iactura est, si a mundo et diabolo pungamur, cum habeamus Angelos, imo Deum ipsum benedicentem nos, et conterentem adversarios."

[101] LW 7.195; WA 44.443: "Et Michael pugnat non tantum in Ecclesia, sed et in politia cum malis angelis: quia rapina, furta, fraudes, caedes sunt opera Diaboli, quae Magistratus quidem ex animis hominum non potest tollere …"

despair — Luther writes in his comments on Genesis 26:17-8[102] that humans learn only through difficulty. But these trials have another benefit for believers in that through them, they learn about that the angels protect them from all harm. Still, even that comforting thought comes only through meditation on the Law and study of the Word, from which the devil constantly distracts believers.[103]

Luther finds precedent for such militaristic language in the very beginning of Genesis. To him, the entirety of creation is at war with the devil. From his comments on Genesis 2:1:

> Expressions of this kind the prophets borrowed from Moses, who uses military terminology in this passage and calls the stars and the luminaries of heaven the army or host of heaven; but men, beasts, and trees he calls the host of the earth. Perhaps he does this in view of later usage, because later on God calls Himself the God of the armies or of the hosts, that is, not only of the angels or of the spirits but of the entire creation, which carries on warfare for Him and serves Him. After Satan had been cast away by God on account of his sin, he was filled with such hatred of God and of man that, if he were able, he would in one moment rob the sea of its fish, the air of its birds, the earth of its fruits of every kind, and would destroy everything. But God created all these creatures to be in active military service, to fight for us continually against the devil, as well as against men, to serve us and be of use to us.[104]

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[102] "So Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar and settled there. Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham; for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the names that his father had given them." (NRSV)

[103] LW 5.63; WA 43.472: "Sed sine tentatione nihil discimus, neque quicquam proficimus. Ea enim militia et exercitatio Christianorum est, qua cognoscimus, nos esse sub custodia angelorum: et quantumvis gravibus et difficilibus tentationibus exerceamur: non tamen nocere eas nobis. Haec Theologia nostra est, quae non facile aut subito discitur, sed assidue meditandum est in lege, standum est in acie contra Diabolum, qui conatur nos retrahere a studio verbi, et languefacere fidem nostram."

[104] LW 1.74; WA 42.56: "Huiusmodi Phrases a Mose Prophetae mutuati sunt, qui hoc in loco militari verbo stellas et luminaria coeli vocat exercitum seu miliciam coeli, Homines autem, bestias et arbores vocat miliciam terrae. Fortasse in futurum eventum, quia Deus postea se vocat Deum exercituum seu miliciarum, hoc est, non tantum Angelorum seu spirituum, sed totius creaturae, quae ei militat et servit. Nam Satan postquam propter peccatum a Deo abiectus est, tanto odio Dei et hominum impletus est, ut, si posset, uno momento mare piscibus, aërem volucribus, terram omnis generis fructibus orbaret et omnia perderet. Sed Deus creavit istas creaturas omnes, ut stent in milicia et sine fine pugnent contra Diabolum pro nobis, et contra homines, dum nobis serviunt ac nobis prosunt."

But while all of creation resists the devil, the angels are able to do so in miraculous ways that are impossible for humanity to imitate. Luther says in his comments on Genesis 19 that men such as Elijah and Elisha have certainly been able to perform great miracles — but not through their own power. The angels, however, are much more powerful, and thus, capable of greater miracles through their own strength. He goes on to say that while God does not need to rely on God's creations to govern Creation, God certainly does so — though God also may step in from time to time when God chooses. But the ways in which God's creations act reveal the divine power, which pleases God. So the angels and humanity cooperate in Creation — but the angels have much greater tasks, tasks that require their greater strength. Luther cites such examples as the angel who killed 185,000 Assyrians in a single night in II Kings 19:35, Christ's praise of the angels in Matthew 26:53, and even the story of Job — though this last proves instead that the evil angels are likewise powerful.[105] For the good angels, this measure of power — enough to destroy entire nations and people should God will it — is their glory.[106]

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[105] Cf. Augustine, *City of God* XXI.6, NPNF I.2.457: "For if such marvels are wrought by unclean devils, how much mightier are the holy angels! and what can not that God do who made the angels themselves capable of working miracles!"

[106] LW 3.269-70; WA 43.68: "Pertinet autem hoc ad descriptionem offitii et potentiae Angelorum. Nam Helias, Helisaeus et alii, sicut Hebraeorum undecimo est, etiam faciunt miracula grandia, sed non propria virtute. Oportet accedat oratio et fides, ad haec, tanquam ad causam, sine qua non, ut Philosophi appellant, sequuntur miracula. Sic Petrus orat, et in fide Christi iubet claudum surgere, sed angeli sunt potentes, ut faciant mirabilia sua virtute concreata ipsis.

Omnino enim hoc verum est, quod Deus mundum hunc visibilem gubernat non tantum per homines, sed etiam per Angelos. Posset quidem occidere fures sine carnificis opera, et sine Magistratus civilis sententia: sicut nonnunquam facit, praesertim cum homicidis. Sic posset homines creare sine coniunctione maris et foeminae, sicut creavit Adam et Euam: sed divinae maiestati placuit hominum ministerio et opera uti: Ut scilicet ostenderet mirabilem et divinam suam potentiam in creaturis suis, quas non voluit esse ociosas. Ideo Paulus vocat nos omnes 'cooperarios Dei'. Utitur enim nostro ministerio ad varias res, sic etiam Angelorum ministerio utitur, quos instruxit tanta potentia, ut propria virtute seu concreata possint perdere terras et populos, si Deus sit apud eos. Est autem haec magna gloria, tanta potentia instructos esse, nota enim est historia. Quod Angelus Domini una nocte et uno impetu sub rege Ezechia centena et octuaginta quinque milia Assyriorum occiderit. Et Christus praedicat Angelorum potentiam, cum ad Petrum dicit Matthaei 26. de duodecim legionibus. Cum unus Angelus ad vertendos et perdendos hostes Christi satis fuisset. Quin historia Hiob testatur etiam malos Angelos ingenti potentia instructos esse."

Luther admits, continuing his comments on Genesis 19, that these stories of angels destroying peoples and nations is terrifying. But they serve two purposes: first, to teach humanity to fear God and second, to teach humanity to trust in God, who has appointed such powerful beings to defend them. If God had not done so, the entirety of creation would be in jeopardy. Not all of this protection takes place through armed conflict, however. Luther writes that the angels are also responsible for the efficacy of medicine. As new diseases appear, the angels participate in the work of physicians, pushing and directing them to find cures.[107] He goes on to say:

> … this protection of the angels, which God wanted to be more powerful than Satan, gives us comfort. This government of God though His creatures is wonderful, because the angels, who support the godly, defend the entire human race, even though it is exposed to lions, wolves, dragons, and all the horrible leaders of Satan who have been trained to inflict harm not only with the sword, plagues, and countless diseases but also with heresies of every kind.[108]

As much as Luther believed that the angels protect all of humanity and creation, he believed that they protect the people of the church to an even greater extent. Though humanity is incapable of knowing God Himself, the care and friendship of the angels is a clear indication to believers of the extent of God's love for them.[109]

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[107] LW 3.271; WA 43.69: "Utile autem est scire haec, ut et pii habeant consolationem: impii autem terrorem. Nos enim, qui credimus, debemus certi esse, quod proceres coelorum nobiscum sint: Non unus et alter, sed magna copia. Sicut apud Lucam est, coelestes exercitus apud Pastores fuisse, quod si absque hac custodia esset, et Dominus hoc modo Satanae furorem non arceret, non viveremus uno momento. … Occupati igitur boni Angeli sunt, ne ferus hostis noceat, nec medicina, nec alia media per se valerent, nisi adessent Angeli, et quod nascentibus novis morbis nova remedia ostenduntur: non hominum ea industria est, sed Angelorum ministerium, qui artificum animos gubernant et impellunt, sicut Sathan etiam suos, teste Paulo gubernat et impellit."

[108] LW 3.271; WA 43.69: "Sed consolatur nos haec Angelorum custodia, quam Deus voluit potentiorem esse Satana. Admirabilis igitur haec Dei gubernatio est per creaturas, quod totum humanum genus expositum leonibus, lupis, draconibus et omnibus horribilibus ducibus Sathanae, qui instructi sunt, non tantum ut noceant gladio et pestibus et infinitis morbis: sed etiam omni genere haeresium: Tamen per Angelos, qui pro piis stant, defenditur."

[109] LW 4.257; WA 43.319: "Deus ista cura et familiaritate Angelorum voluit significare, quanti faciat nos, qui credimus in ipsum, et quam vehementer nos diligat, utinam per nostram corruptionem et horribilem

As we have seen before, Abraham's house provides Luther with perfect examples of the interaction between angels and the family. For him, the angel's work to return Hagar to the household in Genesis 16 is "a very fine example to show that God loves domestic establishments and protects them through the ministry of His angels." Satan had caused her to flee, but the angel — as guardian of the household — brought her back home, maintaining God's promise to Abraham.[110]

Luther places importance on the notion that God's promise to Abraham and his house entails angelic protection, pointing more than once in the *Lectures* to Psalm 91:11 and to Psalm 34:7,[111] such as in his comments on Genesis 26. These verses reveal the presence of the angels, in which Isaac and his household steadfastly believed — as should all believers. At times, Luther acknowledges, evil may occur due to an unknowable purpose of God's. Nevertheless:

> … the godly should comfort themselves in this manner: 'I know that I have guardian angels; but that I have to bear some misfortune, this I leave to the will of God. For I am in the camp of the angels. God is not a liar. Therefore He will not forsake me.[112]

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illam depravationem possemus agnoscere et redamare Deum, qui se tam benignum et propitium exhibet, ut nobiscum habitet et conversetur, licet invisibiliter …"

[110] LW 3.60; WA 42.591: "Hoc pulcherrimum exemplum est, quod Deus amat Oeconomias et eas per ministerium Angelorum suorum servat. Satanae opus fuerat, quod Hagar commota profugerat in solitudinem, et deseruerat dominam: sed Angeli, custodes huic patrifamilias additi, Hagar iterum reducunt, ut servetur promissio, qua Deus confirmarat, se Abrahae Deum fore et semini eius."

[111] LW 6.41; WA 44.30: "Cum igitur sumus sub protectione Dei, nihil dubium est, quin et in custodia et excubiis angelorum simus, qui et in vita periclitantibus adsunt, et moribundos deducunt in locum pacis et quietis. 'Angelis enim, inquit David, mandavit de te' etc. Item: 'Castra metatur angelus Domini in circuitu piorum.'" See also LW 4.253; WA 43.317, where Luther is commenting on Genesis 24 and Abraham's sending of his servant to fetch a wife for Issac: "Hinc in Psalmis manarunt dulcissimae voces: 'Castra metatur Angelus circa timentes eum' 34. 'Angelis suis mandavit de te' 91."

[112] LW 5.62; WA 43.471: "Haec in exemplum et consolationem nobis proponuntur. Si enim habemus promissionem, tum infallibilis consequentia est, adesse circa nos angelos. Et inde versus Psalmi 34. fluxit: 'Angelus Domini castra metatur.' Item Psalmi 91.: 'Angelis suis mandavit de te.' Hoc ipsi infirmiter et sine ulla dubitatione crediderunt. Itaque nos quoque si sumus pii, credamus in promissionem eius, qui non potest mentiri, tunc certo sumus sub eius protectione, certum etiam est adesse nobis angelos. Quod si quid mali nobis accidit praeter aut contra istam fiduciam et tutelam, id fit singulari consilio, abscondito nobis ac praesertim adversariis. Sic autem consolentur se pii. Ego scio me habere custodes angelos, sed quod adversi aliquid ferendum est, id permitto divinae voluntati. Sum enim in castris angelorum, Deus non est mendax, ideo non deseret me."

In the face of misfortune, Luther counsels his audience to remember that God's promise cannot fail. Protection and care is the priority of the angels, as "groomsmen at the wedding."[113] Thus, the stories of Abraham and the other patriarchs deserve to be retold and emphasized, so that believers can learn deeper faith and trust in the promises of God. Furthermore, believers also have baptism, God's Word, absolution and God's calling as evidence of God's succor — and of the angels' as well. Thus, says Luther in his comments on Genesis 37:

> … even if all things are in confusion, heaven and earth are merged, all the gates of hell (cf. Matthew 16:18) are moved, and the pope, the emperor, and the Turk rage in most cruel fashion, all you have to say is: 'I am baptized.' Then all is well with you; in this confidence you will conquer, for God is taking care of you; He will not forsake you, nor will any disadvantage happen without regard to your salvation.[114]

Yet even in the midst of these assurances of the unfailing nature of angelic protection and God's promise, we can see that Luther also remains aware of those times when God's protection and the presence of the angels seems far away. And while he exhorts his audience to bear up under misfortune, he also speaks of the times when the angels either withdraw their protection or simply remain silent. As one example, he writes that Cain

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[113] LW 4.254; WA 43.317-18: "Et tamen certa res est de praesentia Angelorum, de qua ne semel quidem ambigendum erat. Certum est eos non solum adventum nostrum in futuram patriam expectare, sed vere nobiscum versari in hac vita, curantes et gubernantes nostra negotia, si modo firma fide id credimus. Quod si adversi aliquid in vita accidit: Cogita, Deus coeli promisit et iuravit se velle esse Deum meum: ergo non desperabo de auxilio et defensione, quia audio magnos illos principes in coelis nihil aliud, quod agant, habere, quam ut sint paranimphi in nuptiis, coniungant sponsum et sponsam, curent nuptias, custodiant liberos et rem familiarem."

[114] LW 6.365; WA 44.273: "Haec in historiis patrum dicenda et saepe inculcanda sunt, ut discamus fortiter stare in fide, et magnifacere nostras promissiones. Du solt dich nicht gering achten, quando baptisatus es, quando habes verbum Dei, absolutus es, vocatus es, cogita super te expansum esse regnum coelorum, et non solum Deum, sed omnes Angelos habere in te defixos oculos. Etiamsi igitur omnia turbentur, coelum terrae misceatur, moveanturque omnes portae inferorum, Papa, Caesar, Turca saeviant crudelissime, tu tantum dic: Ego sum baptisatus, so hastus gar, hac fiducia vinces. Quia Deus te curat, non deseret te, neque quicquam incommodi citra salutem tuam accidet."

wandered the earth and remained unsettled because he no longer possessed the promise of divine help — and therefore no longer had angelic protection.[115]

But perhaps Luther's favorite example of this abandonment, in Genesis, is Joseph. Luther sees the obvious response to Joseph's imprisonment in Genesis 39 as being to question why God chooses to desert him. Luther's reply to such a question, however, is that God is not deserting Joseph; rather, God is choosing to cause his suffering as an example for the Christians who come after him, so that they may learn to "persevere, hope, and trust in the Lord," in the face of whatever occurs, be it good or evil. Even in such painful experiences, "the church and the angels of God are honoring us."[116]

Nevertheless, this imprisonment, bad as it was, is overshadowed by two other events: the suffering that Jacob experienced in Genesis 34, when Dinah was seized by Shechem, and Joseph's (and by extension, Jacob's) suffering when he was kidnapped by his brothers and sold to the Midianite in Genesis 37. In both of these cases, Luther emphasizes the angels' silence.

In his comments on Genesis 34, Luther highlights Jacob's despair at the gulf between God's promise of angelic protection and the dragging away of his daughter to defilement or worse. God, says Luther, is ignoring the whole event and permitting its occurrence, while the angels do nothing. The real horror of the situation, he says, is that it is happening to a believer — this is something that should happen to God's enemies. But again, Jacob's suffering becomes a lesson in endurance and patience for Christians. All

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[115] LW 1.301; WA 42.222: "Etsi igitur Cain esset Dominus totius mundi et haberet omnes opes mundi, Tamen, quia caret promissione divini auxilii et destituitur custodia Angelorum nec habet aliud, quo nitatur, quam humana consilia, vere vagus et instabilis est."

[116] LW 7.98; WA 44.372: "Ubi igitur nunc est Deus Ioseph, qui liberet eum et eripiat? cur ipsum deserit? Respondeo: Non deserit, sed exercet eum in exemplum et consolationem omnium sanctorum: ut discamus perseverare, sperare et credere in Dominum (Es gerad wie es woell) in multa pacientia, in adflictionibus, in necessitatibus, per gloriam et ignominiam, per convicia et laudes, sicut monet Paulus 2. Corinthiorum 6. Certum enim est Ecclesiam et Angelos Dei nos honorare: Hoc sufficiat nobis, nec frangamur animis …"

that humanity is capable of understanding is that God administers His kingdom in such a way that the godly suffer and the ungodly prosper.[117]

Luther's comments on Joseph's suffering in Genesis 37, while following a similar argument, are decidedly more optimistic. In fact, he goes so far as to say that Joseph's story could potentially be more powerful than Christ's:

> In such danger we see the deepest silence of God and the angels. They allow Joseph to rush headlong into the most sorrowful disaster and death itself; they see that the father will be very wretched and afflicted on account of the death of his son, yet they do not hinder the endeavors of the brothers. Let us therefore mutually exhort one another to endurance by the examples of these men, who were like us in the bearing of the cross, for these examples are nearer and more familiar to us and therefore move us more than the example of the Son of God. For the latter is inclined to be too sublime and without comparison, even though He also says of Himself (Matthew 26:24): 'The Son of man goes as it is written of Him,' as though neither His heavenly Father nor the angels are mindful of Him since, indeed, He is given over to the cruel Jews to be tortured and crucified. In the same manner these two go into death, while God and the angels keep silent and even rejoice, for this does not take place for the destruction of Joseph and Jacob but for the salvation of many. But this plan of God is still secret, although it is an excellent one and very useful.[118]

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[117] LW 6.191-2; WA 44.142: "Indignum profecto et miserabile est, tantum Patriarcham tanta contumelia adfici, qui tot munitus erat promissionibus, quod in tutela Dei, sub praesidio et custodia angelorum futurus esset. Ubi nunc illi angelorum exercitus, et Mahanaim? ubi gloriosissima victoria, qua vicit Deum et homines? Ubi magnifica illa acclamatio: 'praevaluisti adversus Deum et hominem'? Quis hic custodit? Quis vigilat? Deus et angeli connivent, dissimulant. Deus ignorat, et non aliter se gerit, ac si nesciat nec videat filiam rapi ad stuprum. Permittit enim hoc fieri quiescentibus et cessantibus angelis. Ingens certe et deploranda calamitas est, quam non hominibus piis, sed hostibus DEI, ethnicis et impiis evenire oportuit. Ideo discenda est pacientia, si quando nobis etiam tristia et inusitata haec accidunt, quae videntur nulla ratione aut pacientia tolerari posse, qualis haec sane tentatio fuit, superans omnem tolerantiam et pacientiam humanam, sicut postea fratrum crudelis vindicta testabitur. Sic enim sanctissimi viri subiecti fuerunt tragicis calamitatibus, et videtur rationi regnum Dei sic administrari, ut par sit cura piorum et impiorum, imo horum foelicitas longe maior quam piorum."

[118] LW 6.351; WA 44.262-3: "In tanto periculo videmus altissimum silentium esse Dei et Angelorum. Sinunt Ioseph praecipitem ire in tristissimam calamitatem et mortem ipsam, vident patrem futurum miserrimum et adflictissimum propter mortem filii, tamen non impediunt conatus fratrum. Exhortemur igitur nos mutuo ad tolerantiam exemplis illorum hominum, qui in cruce ferenda nobis fuerunt similes, quae propiora nobis et familiariora sunt, ideoque magis nos movent, quam exemplum filii Dei. Id enim aliquanto sublimius est et absque comparatione. Quanquam is quoque de se dicit, Et quidem filius hominis secundum quod definitum est vadit, quasi nec pater coelestis, nec Angeli ipsum curent, siquidem obiicitur Iudeis crudelissimis lacerandus et crucifigendus. Ad eundem modum vadunt hi duo ad mortem tacente Deo, tacentibus Angelis, imo gaudentibus. Quia non fit in perditionem Ioseph et Iacob, sed in salutem multorum. Verum id consilium Dei adhuc arcanum est, quanquam optimum et utilissimum."

Thus, according to Luther, a Christian should not despair when he or she feels totally abandoned by God or by the angels. In such times, it may simply be the case that the angels are working towards some greater purpose, a purpose that cannot be understood by mere human perspective. But even when the angels seem silent or far away, the Christian should trust that they remain present, committed to his or her protection.

Which brings us to the longest section in the *Lectures on Genesis* in which Luther discusses angels: his comments on Genesis 32. While these pages do not directly touch on all of the topics we have covered so far, the very fact that they comprise the longest discourse on angels in the *Lectures* is reason enough to explore them, and the topic with which we begin follows well from the previous questions on the nature of the angels' silence.

Luther begins by considering why it is that so many evil occurrences happen, displeasing God, when the angels comprise God's army and are spiritual servants. All that the ungodly have — life, wealth, prestige — come from the good angels.[119] Luther's reply? He says that one should not ask why God chooses to reward evil, or why God would distribute gifts in like manner between those who are good and those who are evil. Instead, one should see this as evidence of God's infinite goodness, a goodness that is so far beyond human standards as to be incomprehensible.[120] And again, rather than fall into despair at the seeming injustice of it all, Luther counsels the godly to "Wait, endure, and hold out," because God remains in control and the angels remain both protective and in

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[119] Cf. above.

[120] LW 6.91; WA 44.67: "Ad hunc modum responderi potest ad quaestionem illam. Si sunt angeli castra Dei et spiritus administratorii: quare tam multa mala eveniunt, quae displicent Deo? Impiis bene est, donantur vita, honoribus, dignitatibus, abundant opibus. Ista profecto omnia dantur per bonos angelos hominibus pessimis. Sed respondeo: non esse disputandum de divinis consiliis, cur malis etiam largiatur bona, et dispergat sua dona pariter in bonos et malos, in gratos et ingratos. Sicut ait Christus Matthaei 5. Ideo enim hoc fit, ut ostendat se non habere humanam tantum, et suis limitibus circumscriptam bonitatem, sed potius immensam, infinitam et incompraehensibilem."

charge — despite seeming to have forsaken their duty. Even so, as he reminds his audience, temptations and trials still exist. In them, God "exercises" good people and evil people alike. Luther likens this exercise to a great storm, whose lightning and wind seemingly threaten everything in their path, yet afterwards is shown to have been beneficial, as new vegetation springs forth.[121] And thus, when something evil occurs, one must see it not as the result of angelic neglect, but rather as "the temptation by which the godly as individuals and the whole church are accustomed to be disciplined in this life."[122]

And so, says Luther, one should leave God alone to administer how God chooses — but one should also praise God for His mercy. God's mercy, he says, is such that far more good occurs than does evil, and that this fact is true even in the lives of those who do evil. The angels are the primary heroes here, for if God chose not to govern His creation through them for even a single moment, the devil would destroy not only the human race, but also the entirety of Creation, through flood, famine, plague, and other horrors — which would afflict not just evil people, but good ones as well. "But that we can be secure and safe from such great perils under the protection of the armies and hosts of heaven, this we should determine for certain." It is true that sometimes the angels allow such evils to occur, but this is only — as Luther has said before — so that

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[121] LW 6.92; WA 44.68: "Eodem modo ducit et gubernat et pios et impios. Quando iam iam videntur ruitura omnia: non tamen abiicienda est prorsus omnis spes et fiducia. Sed expecta, perfer et perdura. Deus adhuc vivit, angeli regunt et defendunt. Et quanquam videntur obliti muneris et custodiae demandatae: tamen revera non cessant. Sed est tentatio et probatio, qua Deus non solum pios, sed etiam impios exercet: Quanquam impii quidem non intelligunt. Perinde ut in tempestatibus subitis ventorum et imbrium, ac fulminum impetus minantur coelo et terrae conflagrationem aut ruinam totius orbis terrarum. Verum sedata tempestate germinat terra, et ostendit plurimum ad foecunditatem profuisse tempestatem quantumvis horridam."

[122] LW 6.90; WA 44.66-7: "Si quid autem adversi accidit, nequaquam id negligentiae angelorum in ministerio eorum tribuendum, sed potius ad tentationem referendum erat, quibus solent in hac vita pii singuli et tota Ecclesia exerceri.

Christians may exercise their faith, and recognize the greatness of God's governance and give Him thanks. The patriarch Jacob is Luther's example here, since in this passage, he continues on his way securely and confidently because he has met the hosts of heaven.[123]

But who are the beings that comprise these hosts? Luther does spend time in this passage describing them and their duties in Creation:

> The Epistle to the Hebrews (1:14) describes them in the words: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" [The angels] are not gods or goddesses but ministers who serve the world, and who do so on account of those who will inherit eternal salvation. For whatever is done in this life is all done on account of the godly men and those who are to be saved. For their sakes the sun shines, kingdoms are preserved and established, the earth is made fruitful, and marriages are contracted. In short, all things in heaven and earth are ordained to this end, and the righteous should be gathered together and the number of those who are to be saved should be filled up.[124]

He writes that they can be called "hosts, soldiers, watchmen, guides, and governors over God's creation." All of these roles, however, are merely their lower offices — watching and governing humanity and other creatures. The angels' more noble mission is to praise God in song. But Luther also links their lower office to their duty as spiritual warriors, fighting not only for Christians, but also for non-Christians; Luther points to Daniel 10:20

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[123] LW 6.92; WA 44.68: "Relinquamus igitur ipsi suam administrationem, et praedicemus maximam misericordiam, siquidem palam est plus boni evenire, quam mali, etiam in malis et blasphemis, qui et ipsi sua bona corporalia habent. Si enim vel uno die non gubernaret Deus orbem terrarum per angelos, subito universum genus humanum occidione occideret, raperet, ageret, perderet fame, peste, bellis, incendiis. Et haec ferenda essent non malis tantum, sed et bonis. Quod vero ab his tantis periculis securi et tuti esse possumus praesidio castrorum et exercituum coelestium, id fieri certo statuamus. Permittunt quidem interdum angeli, ut aliqua mala accidant, sed ideo, ut tentemur, ut fides nostra probetur et exerceatur, atque adeo ut discamus Deum agnoscere in mirabilibus consiliis et operibus suis, eique pro miranda gubernatione gratias agamus. Quemadmodum docet nos hoc exemplum Patriarchae Iacob. Is enim pergit laetus et confidens, propterea quod illuxit ei sol, et oblati sunt coelestes exercitus, sed aliquanto post rursus sol occidet. Iam regnat et triumphat plenus fide et gaudio spiritus: Sed mox in summam miseriam et perturbationem coniicietur."

[124] LW 6.89; WA 44.66: "Sic enim definit eos Epistola ad Hebraeos: 'Nonne omnes sunt administratorii spiritus: in ministerium missi propter eos, qui haereditatem capient salutis'. Non sunt dii aut deae, sed sunt ministri administrantes orbem terrarum. Idque propter eos, qui aeternam salutem haereditabunt. Quicquid enim rerum in hac vita geritur, hoc omne propter homines pios et eos, qui salvandi sunt, geritur. Propter eos lucet sol: conservantur et stabiliuntur regna, foecundatur terra, coniugia contrahuntur. Breviter omnia, quae sunt in coelo et in terra, ad hunc finem ordinata sunt, ut colligantur iusti, et numerus salvandorum impleatur."

as evidence. In that passage, however, when the angel says that he is returning to fight the prince of the Persians, one must understand that the Persian prince had to have been an evil angel — good angels do not fight against each other. Thus, his audience learns again that the devil, "the god of this world," has his own angels and his own spiritual monarchy.[125] This conflict is the source of the "heathen" notion of household gods or genii, he says. But despite what such beliefs would teach, God remains the ruler of Creation and through the angels, controls the all nations — even those that are non-Christian. One can also see evidence of this conflict between good and evil angels within the secular government and the courts: good causes are often delayed or impeded, and yet the outcome eventually is favorable, due to the "leadership and counsels" of the good angels.[126] Why are good causes obstructed in this way? Because the devil owns the government of this world, and confuses all things through chance and randomness.

Where are the good angels in all of this chaos? Luther again points towards the incomprehensibility of God's wisdom and plan (he also acknowledges that he has made this same point before). What is different here, however, is that he also comments that what should be obvious is the way that the devil is bound — "held captive as though fetters and manacles had been put on him" — and completely unable to harm Christians

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[125] LW 6.87-8; WA 44.64-5: "Appellantur ergo angeli exercitus, milites, στρατιῶται, vigiles, rectores, gubernatores in creatura Dei. Id enim est eorum officium inferius. Superius est canere: Gloria in excelsis Deo. Inferius erga nos et creaturas est vigilare, gubernare, militare, non tantum pro piis: sed etiam pro impiis. Sicut ex Daniele patet, ubi dicit angelus se reverti, ut praelietur adversum principem persarum. Angelus autem bonus non resistit bono angelo. Ideo princeps Persarum fuit malus angelus, et de numero illorum, de quibus inquit Christus: 'Princeps huius mundi eiicietur foras'. Sathanas deus huius seculi, habet maximos exercitus diabolorum, et est etiam inter malos angelos quaedam monarchia."

[126] LW 6.88; WA 44.65: "Sicut etiam gentes aliquam umbram huius cognitionis retinuerunt, quando finxerunt lares, aut genios bonos et malos. Deus est creator et gubernator omnium, qui etiam impiorum, ut Babiloniorum, Assyriorum, Persarum imperia administrat per angelos: sicut testatur Daniel, et in nostris aulis ac regiminibus idem apparet. Unde fit, ut saepe etiam optimae causae in aulis varie impediantur, turbentur et protrahantur, et tandem tamen foelices exitus sortiantur ductu et consiliis bonorum angelorum. Atque haec sunt mirabilia consilia Dei, de quibus non est disputandum, cur hac aut alia ratione gubernet mundum."

unless God permits him to do so.[127] Thus, although human wisdom is not enough to fully understand this reality, one can acknowledge this "heavenly doctrine," that the whole of the world, from empire to household, is governed by the ministry of the angels.[128]

Let us return to Jacob. In these first verses of Genesis 32, Luther sees Jacob's relief at finding respite from trouble and difficulty. Furthermore, Jacob also meets the angels. But this angelic visitation is not a new experience for Jacob, says Luther. In fact, the patriarchs often met angels: Abraham and Hagar, as we have seen, but also Jacob himself, in his vision of the ladder and his instruction to return to his homeland. Then again, these folk often had special need for contact with the angels. Jacob, however, sees many angels, not just one.[129] He had learned about angels from both his ancestors and his own experiences of the vision of the ladder and his dream in Genesis 31. This present visitation by many angels, however, brings together knowledge and experience, says Luther: "Otherwise this doctrine and wisdom is too sublime for it to be comprehensible by human reason, which does not know that angels exercise care over empires, kingdoms,

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[127] LW 6.90; WA 44.66: "Quomodo ergo stat angelorum administratio? Respondeo: Haec est, ut antea dixi, admiranda et incompraehensibilis sapientia Dei, quam non assequitur ratio humana. Quanquam si velimus aperire oculos, hoc perspicere et iudicare possemus, Diabolum esse vinctum, et captivum teneri, tanquam iniectis compedibus et manicis, ita ut ne capillum quidem capitis nostri possit attingere, nisi volente et permittente Deo."

[128] LW 6.89; WA 44.66: "Haec itaque vere coelestis doctrina est, non rationis et sapientiae humanae: quod in hac vita ministerio sanctorum angelorum et imperia, et politiae, et oeconomiae, Denique quae habet hic mundus, omnia gubernentur."

[129] LW 6.87; WA 44.64: "Ad hanc ergo tacitam laetitiam, quia defunctus est iam omnibus molestiis et difficultatibus, insuper etiam hoc accedit, quod habet obvios angelos et castra Dei. Antea vero etiam testatus est Moses, Patriarchas frequenter admodum habuisse angelorum apparitiones, ut supra de Abraham, de Hagar, de Scala Iacob et angelis ascendentibus et descendentibus commemoravit. Item quando per angelum admonitus est Iacob, ut rediret in patriam. Saepe igitur angelos conspexerunt, et eorum quidem conspectu optimis et sanctissimis patribus in primis opus fuit: verum hic non unum angelum, sed exercitum angelorum videt. Sicut loquitur Lucas: 'Facta est cum angelo multitudo coelestis exercitus'." Luther, sadly, does not expand here on what he means by the "special need" (*in primis opus*) of the patriarchs. If we consider the circumstances of Hagar's situation that caused the angel to intervene — and Luther's comments on that passage — we should find an inkling of his meaning here: her circumstances were extreme to the point of angelic intervention as the only possible solution.

the household, men, beasts, and, in short, all creatures."[130] Thus, Jacob[131] recognized the angels as God's army, and joyously called the site מַחֲנַיִם *(mahanim)*.

Luther himself sums up his comments on the angels and Genesis 32:

> This, then, is the doctrine which is taught in this passage, that the angels are ministering spirits and servants of creation. They fight for the safety and welfare of the world and the godly, and this is their lower office. Their higher office, however, is to sing "Glory to God in the highest" and " We praise Thee, O God, etc." In heaven likewise they see the Father's face (cf. Matthew 18:10). This they do to the glory of God and to their own joy and that of all the believers. They also well understand that wondrous government of this life, namely, how the good fortune of the ungodly agrees with the adverse fortune of the godly, which we cannot understand in this life of the flesh. But at the end of the world and after this life we shall see the most beautiful harmony and concord of this administration.[132]

In addition, says Luther, with such limited nature and understanding, humanity is incapable of seeing more than that which causes them to judge the world as being haphazard and random, ruled by the devil while God sleeps. Instead, the reality is that God's government preserves far more than it allows to be destroyed, that God's will and power is greater than the devil's. Even the saints remain bound by this weakness, and waver when they are confronted by the world. "This [wavering] comes to pass because we are not yet in that light which the angels enjoy and do not yet perceive how sin and

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[130] LW 6.89; WA 44.65-6: "Et hoc loco videt exercitum et castra angelorum. Itaque coniunguntur res ipsa et verba, sive scientia et factum et experientia. Alioqui doctrina et sapientia haec sublimior est, quam ut humana ratione compraehendi possit. Ea enim ignorat angelos curam agere imperiorum, regnorum, oeconomiae, hominum et iumentorum, denique omnium creaturarum."

[131] LW 6.87; WA 44.64: "Ait autem Moses inter eundum obviam ei factus angelos, quibus conspectis magno gaudio agnoverit castra et exercitum Dei esse, nomenque loci illius appellarit Mahanaim …"

[132] LW 6.92-3; WA 44.68: "Haec igitur est doctrina, quae hoc loco traditur: quod sint spiritus administratorii et ministri creaturae, qui praeliantur pro incolumitate et Ialute mundi et piorum: Idque inferius eorum officium est. Superius autem est canere: Gloria in excelsis Deo, et Te Deum laudamus etc. Item in coelis vident faciem patris. Idque faciunt cum gloria Dei et gaudio, et suo et omnium credentium. Illam vero admirandam gubernationem huius vitae ipsi praeclare intelligunt, quam conveniat foelicitas impiorum cum adversa fortuna piorum, quod nos non possumus perspicere in hac carne. Sed in fine mundi et post hanc vitam videbimus pulcherrimam illam harmoniam et concentum huius administrationis."

righteousness, death and life, darkness and light come into agreement."[133] Underlying this quotation is Luther's belief that the lives of humanity and the existence of the angels is closely intertwined — a topic which we will address in the next chapter.

III.4. A Conclusion

Certainly, Luther had much more to say regarding the role of angels in Creation than he did regarding their being. Why might his be? When wrestling with questions about what the angels are, Luther felt the answers could be best understood not by examining the being of angels, but their activity. As he was in the previous chapter, Luther remains remarkably consistent within his own thoughts as he moves forward in his career. What he impressed upon his followers is an emphasis not on the angels as beings of spirit, but as messengers, preservers, and protectors.

And once again, this emphasis is closer to the concerns of Augustine and the early church fathers than it is to those of the medievals, whose angels seem much more passive than Luther's do. What is also fascinating about Luther's approach to the questions of this chapter is that he seems to rely on next to no examples from the previous tradition, citing or responding to none of the authors he wrestled with in the previous section. Instead, his largest source of information and teaching on the role of the angels is the Bible, which he relies on exclusively. That is not to say that Luther performed his task in a vacuum, however. In his discussion of the angels as protectors — especially of believers — we hear echoes of Chrysostom and Bernard. Or when Luther is discussing

[133] LW 6.93; WA 44.68-9: "Et accedit simul iudicium rationis, quod statuit nec Deum nec hominem esse huius mundi rectorem, sed agi mortalia casu. Haec est carnis sapientia, non coelestis illa et inaestimabilis cognitio gubernationis Dei, quae monstrat maiorem esse numerum eorum, quae conservantur, quam quae pereunt in mundo, esse item maiorem Dei bonitatem, quam maliciam Diaboli. Sed ratio et caro etiam in sanctis haesitat et labascit, cum videt tantas confusiones et dissimilitudinem fortunae. Hoc inde fit, quia nondum sumus in illa luce, qua angeli fruuntur, et perspiciunt, quomodo peccatum et iustitia, mors et vita, tenebrae et lux conveniant."

the ways in which angels can influence humanity, we find shades of Aquinas. In Luther's scheme of a tiered order of authority in Creation, we see similarities with Biel's model. Perhaps Luther's greatest influence here is Chrysostom, who himself deals with each of the three roles that we have underscored as being present in Luther's own theology: messenger, preserver, and protector.

Luther does make his own innovations, adding onto and clarifying what he has himself learned. He more deeply explores this role of messenger, exploring what it means, exactly, to be the voice of God, carrying God's Word to Creation. He elaborates on the organization of authority in creation, placing the home and family on the same level as governmental authority and connects the angels to the household explicitly. He also connects the angels to concerns of theodicy, and highlights the necessity of adherence to God's providential plan if one wishes to enjoy the angels' protection. In fact, Luther places a huge amount of importance on the angels' role in the maintenance of Creation, from their control of weather, to their support of medicine, even to their functioning as 'luck' or 'fortune.'

But what is most significant here is that each of the roles Luther defines and explores is inherently relational. Inherent to being a messenger is delivering a message to someone, communicating with someone. As ministers, the angels preach to someone. As protectors, they defend someone or something. As preservers, they support and guide something. In all cases, the angels relate to something — whether it be a human being or the very foundation of Creation itself. This relationship forms the major basis of Luther's thought on the roles the angels play in Creation. And his primary goal in instructing his followers on the subject is for them to understand the powerful and unique relationship

that the angels desire to have with them, a relationship of which humanity can take free and full advantage.

In the next chapter, we will delve into two main forms this relationship takes: between angels and humanity, and between angels and the Church.

"… Peter speaks here to the little company of Christians, and says: Ye, through Christ's blood and death rescued from the devil's lies and murderous intent, have been made alive and have been transplanted into the heavenly life, like your beloved fathers, Adam, Abel, and others. They are no longer under bondage to Satan, but live in Christ, though the body lie for a time in the earth and truth and life must be supplied to their body and soul. But because ye still dwell in the world, ye are exposed to all danger. … the devil has not yet been consigned wholly to the punishment of his damnation, which will be at the last day, when he will finally be cast down from his airy height, and from the earth, into the abyss of hell. Then he will no more be able to attack us, and there will no longer be cloud or veil between us and God and the angels." [1]

Chapter IV: *Die Bindung:* The Angels' Relationships with Humanity and the Church

In this third chapter on Luther's angelological thought, we will explore the two remaining angelological questions: what is the nature of the angels' relationship to humanity, and what is the nature of their relationship with the church? As before, I have chosen to present Luther's teachings in chronologically determined groups, the same as in the last two chapters: Pre-1526, 1526-1535, and 1536-1545. And as in the previous chapters, we will see that Luther's angelology undergoes continual refinement and restatement as his career progresses, without undoing or conflicting with his earlier conclusions.

[1] Church Postils 8.77-8; "Am dritten Sontag nach Trinitatis, Epistel. I. Pet. V." WA 22.37: "… hie S. Petrus mit dem heufflin der Christen und spricht: Jr seid nu durch Christi blut und tod des Teufels luegen und mord entlauffen, lebendig gemacht und ins himlische wesen gesetzt, Gleich ewern lieben Vetern, Adam, Habel etc. die nicht mehr unter der luegen und mord sind, sondern in Christo leben, ob wol der Leib ein zeit lang in der erden ligt, und warheit und Leben beide, an jrem Leib und Seel wider ergentzet mus werden. Aber weil jr noch in der Welt lebt, seid jr noch in aller fahr, Denn jr seid noch mit dem Leibe in des Moerders Haus und Herberge, Darumb muesset jr euch wol fursehen, das er euch nicht widerumb toedte und morde die Seelen, so in diesem sterblichen Leibe wonen. Es sol euch keinen schaden thun, das die Seele ist verderbt gewest, und der Leib noch dem Tod unterworffen ist, Denn ich lebe (spricht Christus) und jr solt leben, Allein, das jr darob kempffet, damit jr in der warheit und leben bleibet, Dazu seid jr gesetzet, weil jr hie auff Erden lebt, sonst weret jr schon im Paradis. Aber der Teufel ist noch nicht gar zur straffe seiner verdamnis verstossen bis an den Juengsten tag, da er endlich wird aus den lufften und von der Erden in abgrund der Hellen geworffen, nicht mehr wird koennen uns anfechten und kein Wolcke noch decke mehr zwischen uns und Gott, sampt den Engeln, sein wird.

IV.1. The Angels' Relationship with Humanity

When I say that we will be looking at how Luther understood the relationship between humanity and the angels, what I mean is that we will dig into not only how they interact with each other, but also — and more importantly — how these two sets of beings are connected to each other, how they compare with each other. We have already touched on this topic a bit in the previous chapter, especially when we discussed the angels' role in creation as protectors. But there, we found that Luther envisioned the angels' mandate as extending to the entirety of Creation and its order, not just to humanity. In this section, we will be focusing on the ways in which he talked about the angels interacting with and relating to humanity in specific.

I have chosen to divide this topic into three categories: 1) simple interaction, with or alongside humans — For instance, Luther often mentions how the angels celebrate with humanity or in joy at something humanity does. He discusses at length the ways in which the angels bring comfort to humanity as part of their ministry, and he also describes the differences between the ways in which humanity and the angels interact with Christ; 2) imitation — Luther often describes the ways in which the angels are to be emulated, and calls upon his listeners to do so, especially when it comes to preaching; and 3) transformation — Luther also speaks at times about the ways in which humanity can become "like" the angels in ways that are deeper than imitation, to the point of humanity actually virtually becoming angels, especially (but not only!) after death. In this half of the chapter, we will be touching on all of these points as he discusses them during the three major divisions of his career.

IV.1.1. Pre-1526

We begin this portion of our survey by exploring Luther's insights into human-angelic interaction during the first period of his career.

IV.1.1.1. Interaction

The interaction that Luther most consistently emphasizes during this period is the role of angels as ministers of comfort. One particular way that he underscores this point is by encouraging his listeners to remember that the angels will never desert those over whom they rule.[2] Presenting a practical example of this care by the angels, Luther also consoles his parishioners by telling them that God will not let anyone who trusts in God to starve to death. Instead, God will send the angels to care and feed him or her.[3]

This theme — that the angels will provide for the needs of the body in times of distress — appears again and again. Certainly, the angels are a source of spiritual comfort. But Luther constantly refers to their care for the body. For example, in a Lenten sermon from 1525, Luther points to the story of Christ's temptation by the devil in Matthew 4. In that sermon, Luther taught that the ministry of the angels to Christ was actual bodily ministry, in that they appeared in bodily form and brought Jesus food and drink.[4] He continues:

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[2] "Praelectio Doctoris Martini Luteri in librum Iudicum." WA 4.533: "… cuius nullo modo sunt rectores angeli desertores …"

[3] "Das Magnificat Vorteutschet und außgelegt durch D. Martinum Luther Aug." WA 7.592: "Es ist yhe nit muglich, das got lasse yemand leiplich hungersz sterben der in yhm vortrawet, es musten ehe alle engel kummen und yhn speyszen."

[4] Church Postils 2.146-7; "Euangelion am Ersten Sontage ynn der fasten. Matthei am 4." WA 17.II.196-7: "Am letzten sind die engel zu yhm getretten und haben yhm gedienet. Das mus leiblich zugangen seyn, das sie leyblich erschienen sind und haben yhm essen und trincken bracht, und gleych wie zu tissch und aller notdurfft gedienet. Denn der dienst ist eusserlich seynem leybe geschehen, gleich wie auch der teuffel, seyn versucher, on zweyffel ynn leyblicher gestalt erschienen ist, vielleicht auch als eyn engel. Denn das er yhn auff die zynnen des tempels stellet und weyset yhm alle reich der wellt ynn eym augenblick, mus er etwas hoehers gewesen seyn denn eyn mensch, wie er sich denn selbs auch etwas hoehers dargibt, da er yhm

> This however is written for our comfort, that we may know that many angels minister also to us, where one devil attacks us; if we fight with a knightly spirit and firmly stand, God will not let us suffer want, the angels of heaven would sooner appear and be our bakers, waiters, and cooks and minister to all our wants. This is not written for Christ's sake for he does not need it. Did the angels serve him, then they may also serve us.[5]

After all, says Luther in another sermon, "Would not the angels, yes all creatures, lend willing assistance when the Lord himself stands ready to help?"[6]

But really, this ministry of comfort of the body is a manifestation of something more important: God's Promise. According to Luther, the Christian may be as sure of the angels' ministry as he or she is sure of God's promise. From a sermon given on the seventh Sunday after Trinity in 1523:

> Thus faith is a sure foundation, through which I expect that which I see not. Therefore faith must always have been sufficient, for before it should fail the angels would have to come from heaven and dig bread out of the earth in order that believing person should be fed. Yes, the heavens and the earth would have to pass away before God would let his believers lack clothing and the other necessities of life. The comforting and powerful Word of the divine promise requires and demands this.[7]

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anbeut alle reich auff erden und will sich anbeten lassen. Er wird aber des teuffels gestallt freylich nicht gefurt haben. Denn er ist gerne schone, wenn er liegen und triegen will, wie S. Paulus von yhm sagt, das er sich alls eyn engel des liechts stelle."

[5] Church Postils 2.147; "Euangelion am Ersten Sontage ynn der fasten. Matthei am 4." WA 17.II.197: "Solchs aber ist uns zu trost geschrieben, das wyr wissen, wie uns viel engel widderumb dienen, wo uns eyn teuffel anficht, so wyr ritterlich fechten. Und so wyr stehen, so lesst uns Gott nicht mangel leyden, es můsten ehe die engel von hymel komen und unser becker, kelner und koeche werden und uns ynn aller notdurfft dienen. Es ist umb Christus willen nich geschrieben, der es nicht bedarff. Haben yhm die engel gedienet, so muegen sie uns auch dienen."

[6] Church Postils 6.210; "Die Epistell an Sanct Stephans tag. Act. vi. unnd vij." WA 10.I.1.267: "Desselben gleychen, wilch engell, wilch creatur sollt nit bereyt seyn und da stehen, ßo der herr selb bereytt ist unnd da stehett tzu helffen? Und ist mercklich gesagt, das er nit eyn engell, nit gott selber, ßondernn den menschen Christum gesehen habe, das die lieplichst und gleychist natur ist und dem menschen aller trostlichst; denn eyn mensch sihet eyn menschen lieber, fur engeln und allen creaturn, ßonderlich ynn den nodten."

[7] Church Postils 4.206; "Sermon von den sieben Broten. (7. Sonntag nach Trinitatis = 19. Juli.)" WA 12.635: "Also ist der glaub ein gewisser grundt, durch den ich erwarte das ich nit syhe, ja der glaub můsß gnůg haben. Dann ee es jm gebrechen solt, muesten die engel von himmel kommen, unnd brot uß der erden graben, uff das ein solcher glaeubiger mensch gespeißt würde. Ja ee muesßt himmel und erden zergon, ee gott ein solchen menschen an kleydung unnd andrer notdurfft mangel liesse: das erheyscht und erfordert das troestlich, geweltig wort goettlicher zůsagung."

Peter's experience in Luke 5 serves as example of this assertion as well, says Luther in a sermon given on the fifth Sunday after Trinity (1522). There, he preaches that God cares even for the needs of humanity's stomachs, as evinced by the amount of fish Peter caught. Thus, humanity should trust in God and have faith — and when that faith is absent, then people suffer need and go hungry. But if faith is present, the angels will come and minister to the faithful.[8] Thus, Isaac's adventures in finding adequate space, food, and water in Genesis 26 cause Luther to remind his listeners that, "… it is a happy heart which knows and thinks, 'I should not complain, because an angel must come from heaven and feed me.'"[9]

Another aspect of the relationship between angels and humanity that Luther chooses to explore is how both kinds of beings relate to Christ, revealing not only the differences in their relationships, but also their similarities. One way that the angels interact with humanity is the way they react when someone turns to Christ. Christians, Luther preaches, have great value to Christ as their Shepherd, and they are the ones over whom the angels in heaven rejoice (a point which will see much more elaboration in later years).[10]

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[8] Church Postils 4.135; "Predig D. Martin Luthers Am tag Petri und Pauli der hailigen zwoelffpotten, geprediget zů Wittemberg. Luce. v." WA 10.III.229-30: "Nun das ist das exempel das uns raitzt, das wir jm zům ersten vertrawen den bauch, dann er sorget für uns auch in zeitlichen guetern. Das sehen wir in Petro, do er als vil visch sieng und sielen jm mit haussen zů, Damit ist klaerlich angezaigt, das got kainen verlassen will, er můß genůg haben, so er nur allain vertrawet, wie der Psalm sagt 'Junior fui et consenui, nec vidi iustum derelictum'. Es faelt nit an guetern, sonder allain an dem glauben, es mueßten ee die engel vom hymel herab kommen und geben. Aber das nun die leüt also not leiden, das macht allain der unglaub."
[9] "In Genesin Mosi librum sanctissimum D. Martini Lutheri Declamationes." WA 24.450: "… daruemb ist sein hertz froelich gewesen und gedacht: Ehe ich solt not leiden, mueste ehe ein Engel vom hymel komen und mich speysen."
[10] Church Postils 4.65-6; "Am fyerden Sonnentag, als Jhesum überfielen die sünder und publicaner." WA 10.III.221: "Also kommestu zu gott und bist schon das schaff, das Gott uff sein schulteren gefasset hat, hast schon den hyrten funden, bist der pfennig der schon in der handt leit und bist der do von ein freüd im himmel allen engelen ist."

But the connection goes beyond merely celebrating at another's good fortune. We have previously seen evidence that Luther considered angels and humans both to be the Images of God, and we see this conclusion again in his *scholia* on Hebrews 1:2. Luther is making the case that Christ was something different from either of them, in that He was of God's essence, and not a mere reflection of God's glory as are both the angels and humanity. Thus, Christ exists on a higher level than either of them.[11]

We see a similar claim in a Christmas sermon on John 1. There, Luther highlights the Evangelist's repetition of John the Baptist's connection to the Light — that he is merely a witness. Luther says that the Evangelist repeats this for two reasons: first, because his goal is to emphasize Christ's divinity in the writing of his gospel, and second, that the Light must be something divine, something above both angels and humanity, if John (whom Luther characterizes as a "great saint" [*groß heilig*]) is not himself the Light. This Light cannot be mere "holiness" [*heiligkeit*], given that it is above the angels, who themselves are "not more than holy" [*die auch nicht über die heiligkeit sein*].[12] And in 1524, Luther preaches that the Word and the sacrament themselves give the believer assurance of his or her own holiness, a fact testified to by God and the angels who themselves are holy. The believer's response when receiving the sacrament, therefore, is to offer the same testimony of holiness, through the fruits it engenders — testimony

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[11] "Commentariolus in epistolam divi Pauli Apostoli ad Hebreos." WA 57.III.100: "Unde non simpliciter dixit: 'splendor eius et figura eius' — nam et angeli et homines sunt imagines splendoris, signacula maiestatis Dei — sed dicit: 'splendor glorie et figura substancie eius', ut intimam et propriam figuram intelligamus Dei per eam."

[12] Church Postils 1.203; "Das Euangelium ynn der hohe Christmesß auß S. Johanne am ersten Capitel." WA 10.I.1.219: "Lieber, warumb sagt er das unnd widderholet nach eyn mal die wort, das Johannes nur eyn zeug sey dißes liechts geweßen? O eyn nottiges widderholen! Zum ersten, tzu beweyßen, das ditz liecht nit eyn mensch, ßondern gott selb sey; denn, wie ich gesagt, der Euangelist wollt gern ynn allen wortten Christus gottheytt antzeygen. Ist Johannes, der groß heylig, nit das liecht, ßondernn nur eyn tzeuge desselben, ßo muß diß liecht weyt mehr seyn denn alliß das da heylig ist, er sey engel odder mensch; denn sollt heylickeyt eyn solch liecht machen, sie hetten Johannem auch eynß gemacht; nu aber ists ubir die heylickeyt, drumb muß es auch ubir die Engel seyn, die auch nitt ubir die heylickeyt seyn."

which is stronger than if the angels themselves were to offer it.[13] Furthermore, says Luther, only Christ is the source for penance, satisfaction for sin, grace, and holiness. Angels are not capable of offering these things (nor are good works, he declares).[14] Only through Christ do human beings (and, by implication, the angels) attain such holiness.

IV.1.1.2. Imitation

The next type of relationship that Luther believes to exist between angels and humanity is one of imitation. He constantly and consistently holds the angels up as examples for his followers to emulate. In a lecture on Psalm 5, Luther remarks that — given that they are both external works of God — angels and humanity are able to become like each other.[15] The best avenue of inquiry about the angels, he says, is not about their substance, but of the fullness of their charity, their glorification of God, and "εὐχαριστίᾳ."[16]

However, at this point in his career, Luther most commonly focuses on the ways in which human preachers should work to be more like the angels. He calls the angels themselves preachers, such as in his comments on John 1:51, naming the angels

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[13] "Predigt am Gründonnerstag." Church Postils 2.211; WA 15.501: "Darumb mussen wyr vor alle ding des bey uns selb gewiss seyn, wie S. Petrus sagt 'Thuet vleyss ewern beruff fest zu machen durch gutte werck'. Es ist zwar wol gewiss an yhm selb das wort und sacrament, Denn daruber zeugt Gott selbs mit allen Engeln und frummen leutten, Aber es feylt noch an dyr, ob du auch dasselb zeugnis gebist. Darumb wenn gleych alle Engel und die gantze welt von dyr zeuget, das du das sacrament nutzlich genommen hast, so ist es doch viel schwecher denn das zeugnis, das du selbs gibst. Aber dazu kanstu nicht kommen, du sehist denn deyn wesen an, ob es erfur leuchte und ynn dyr gewirckt und frucht geschafft habe."

[14] Church Postils 1.421; "Das Euangelium am tage der heyligen drey kuenige. Matthei ij." WA 10.I.1.684-5: "darumb ist keyn puß, keyn gnugthun fur die sund, keyn gnad erlangen, keynn selig werden, denn nur glewben ynn Christo, das er alleyn fur unßer sund gnug than, gnad erworben unnd uns selig gemacht hatt. Darnach allererst die werck frey umbsonst thun yhm ehren, dem nehisten tzu gutt, nit dadurch frum oder selig werden oder die sund ablegen; denn das muß Christo ym glawben alleyn behalltenn unnd unuorsehret bleyben. Er gestattet keyner engelen, schweyg unßern wercken, das sie sollten sund ablegen, gnade erwerben und selig machen, das gepurt yhm, er hatts than und thuts alleyn, will das auch von uns geglewbt haben; unnd wenn wyrs glewben, ßo haben wyrs auch alßo."

[15] "PSALMVS QVINTVS." WA 5.186: "Operibus enim dei externis angeli et homines assimilari possunt."

[16] "Sequitur locus de purificatione Ex Luca" WA 9.477: "Notio angelorum optima est, non de substantia, sed quod pleni sunt charitate, εὐχαριστίᾳ et glorificationum dei …"

mentioned there "preachers and prophets," who ascend and descend in the way the text depicts.[17] But the comparison flows the other way as well; he also calls human preachers 'angels'. II Peter 2 itself calls preachers "angels," says Luther, which is a call for all clergy to be like them.[18] For Luther, no biblical figure exemplifies this imitational existence and connection more completely than John the Baptist. In 1521, Luther preached that Christ Himself calls John the Baptist an angel in Matthew 11.[19] The following year, on the third Sunday in Advent, in a sermon on Matthew 11:2-10, Luther was even more explicit. He is discussing Christ's praise of John in verses 7-10, particularly the fact that Christ names John as His messenger, and that the Bible uses the term 'angel' to refer to such people. And so, here John the Baptist is:

> … also an angel or word-messenger [*mundbote*], and not only such a messenger, but one who also prepares the way before the face of the Master in a manner that the Master himself follows him immediately, which no prophet ever did. For this reason John is more than a prophet, namely, an angel or messenger, and a forerunner, so that in his day the Lord of all the prophets himself comes with this messenger.[20]

Despite his encouragement of his followers to follow the angels' example, Luther also wishes to be cautious regarding what sort of example they are understood to be. To be sure, the angels are excellent examples of holy life and Christian conduct. However, by holding them up as examples of holiness to emulate, Luther does not mean that merely by

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[17] "Dominica Invocavit Ex c. 28." WA 14.400: "nempe 'Ego erigam praedicationem de Christo'. Angeli sunt praedicatores et prophetae qui ascendunt et descendunt …"

[18] "Die ander Epistel Sanct Petri und eine S. Judas gepredigt und ausgelegt." WA 14.45: "**Darumb heyssen die prediger ynn der schrifft** 'Angeli', **das ist Gottis botten. Solche 'Engel' solten unsere geystlichen seyn.**"

[19] "EVANGELIVM DOMINICAE III. MATT. XI." WA 7.508: "Itaque nec alium nec gratioris formae nec posterioris temporis expectetis, sed ego praesens sum, quem ille venturum praedixit, quia ipse est angelus, idest, nuncius, ante faciem meam missus, non iam nunciare adventum meum sed parare viam meam."

[20] Church Postils 1.190; "Am dritten sontag des Advents Euangelium Matt. II." WA 10.I.2.166: "Alßo ist Johannes auch eyn engel odder mundbote, aber nicht alleyn eyn solcher bote, sondern der auch den weg bereytet fur dem angesicht des herrn, alßo, das yhm der herr selbs auff dem fuß nachkompt, wilchs keyn prophet yhe than hatt; darumb ist er mehr denn eyn prophet, nemlich eyn engel oder bote und furgenger, das tzu seyner tzeytt mit yhm tzugleych der herr aller propheten selbs kompt."

doing what the angels do, one can achieve holiness. As he says in a Christmas sermon given in 1522, no thing that one does is useful for becoming a true child of God. He lists several characteristics and actions — blood, relationship, doctrine, reason, free will, good works, good living, Carthusian orders — and tells his congregation that each of them only impedes true Christian existence, even if each of these actions or characteristics is "angelic" in quality [*wenn er gleich engelisch were*][21]. Nevertheless, there are qualities of life that humanity shares with the angels. Speaking on I Peter, Luther makes a comparison between humanity and the angels: just as the angels live in a unity such that their existence depends on one another, so should people live on earth.[22] Likewise, the angels serve only spiritual things, and in heaven, humanity serves alongside them. Yet even on earth, humanity serves with them, albeit spiritually.[23]

IV.1.1.3. Transformation

The final way in which Luther explores the relationship between humanity and the angels is by discussing the ways in which they are like each other. Obviously, we have just touched on ways in which humanity can become more like the angels, through imitation. But Luther also made comments that showed he believed that not only are angels and humans similar in ways that go beyond mere imitation, but also that humanity

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[21] Church Postils 1.214; " Das Euangelium ynn der hohe Christmesß auß S. Johanne am ersten Capitel." WA 10.I.1.234: "Hirauß ists nu klar, wie tzu dißer kindschafft gottis keyn gebluett, keyn frundschafft, keyn gepott, keyn lere, keyn vornunfft, keyn frey wille, keyn gutte werck, keyn gutt leben, keyn Carthuser orden, keyn geystlich standt, wenn er gleych engelisch were, nutzlich odder hulfflich, ia nur hynderlich sey. Denn wo die vornunfft nit wirt tzuuor vorneweret und ynn dißer weßen eynis geredt, ßo fellt sie drauff, vorharttet und vorblendt sich drynn, das yhr nymmer oder gar schwerlich eraußtzuhellffen ist, und meynet, yhr weßen und standt sey recht und gutt, tobet darnach und wuetedt widder alle …"

[22] "Epistel Sanct Petri gepredigt und ausgelegt." WA 12.352: "Die engel ym hymel leben also durch eynander, es sollt auff erden auch wol also seyn, geschicht aber gar wenig."

[23] "Der Ixvij Psalm von dem Ostertag Hymelfart unnd Pfingstag." WA 8.33: "Ja ym hymel aller hymel, das auch die engell dem selben dienen unnd gleyche dienst mit unß yhm ertzeygen, denn der engel dienst ist nit gepunden an eußerliche ding, alßo auch nit der Christen dienst, beyde geystlich dienen."

could experience a kind of transformation that would bring them into even stronger similarity of being.

A key factor that determines how alike humanity and the angels are and can become is the simple fact of humanity's earth-bound existence. But even this is not as great as an impediment as it might seem, given that Luther sees a Christian's overall existence as heavenly. The Christian, he declares in a sermon on Matthew 18, is both sinner and not, dwells both on earth and in heaven — and according to grace, there is no difference between the Christian and an angel.[24] A Christian's life is no longer a human life, but an angelic and heavenly life.[25] This heavenly existence will endure after death, and not just because humans will enter into heaven more fully. The passage into the afterlife itself is even more powerfully transformative, according to Luther. At the moment of death, God commands the angels to receive souls and to administer them.[26] Early in this period, he preached that death means victory over the "lion," and that humanity will fill in gaps amongst the beings of heaven, becoming the "honey in the honeycomb" of God and the angels (echoes of Augustine and Bernard, that).[27] And when a human being dies, Luther said in a 1514 sermon, he or she finds not emptiness, but life. The life lived on earth is like that of a sheep, but life after death is that of the angels. And

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[24] "Lutherus Dominica Ante Simonis et Iudue mat. 18." WA 15.728: "Christianus est peccator et non, est in celo et in terra, **hin auff** iuxta gratiam non est discrimen inter eum et angelum …"
[25] "SCHOLAE: PSALMUS LXXXI." WA 3.623: "Quia vita Christiani non est vita humana, sed angelica et celestis."
[26] "Eyn Sermon von der bereytung zum sterben." WA 2.697: "Er befelht seynen Engeln, allen heyligenn, allen creaturen, das sie mit yhm auff dich sehen, deyner seel warnemen und sie entpfahen."
[27] "SERMO: Domin. VII. post Trinit." WA 1.62: "… nos victo leone et erimus favus mellis Deo et angelis…"

when a Christian dies, only the flesh truly dies; the life that comes, through Christ, is like that of the angels.[28]

IV.1.1.4. *Lectures on Hebrews*

Luther does not actually spend much time in this text on the relationship between angels and humanity. As we have seen in Chapter III, when he does so, he speaks more in terms of ontology, rather than association. But we can point to a few passages that speak a bit more clearly on relationship.

In his comments on 2:14,[29] he teaches that Paul is making a distinction between the way in which humanity shares brotherhood with Christ, and how humanity shares brotherhood with the angels. Paul, says Luther, is praising God, who created Christ to share both flesh and spirit with humanity, in contrast to the angels, with whom He shares only spirit. Thus Christ is higher than the angels, but also nearer to us than they are.[30] But what is important to note in this context is that Luther is framing these comparisons in terms of brotherhood: humanity shares brotherhood with the angels because of the spiritual existence they both enjoy.

Yet Luther's most powerful and important comments come during his exegesis of 1:2, regarding the ways in which humanity and the angels are alike. There, he focuses on the apostle's use of the word 'worlds' to contrast the 'present' and the 'future' world:

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[28] "SERMO: [Contra vitium detractionis]." WA 1.45: "Homo mortuus non est vanitas, sed vivens. Vivens est, qui secundum carnem vivit in sensibus sicut pecus, quia homo mortuus secundum carnem iam plus quam homo, taliter vivens est filius Dei et sicut Angelus."

[29] "Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil …" (NRSV)

[30] LW 29.134; WA 57.III.126-7: "Hic Apostolus discernens fraternitatem inter nos et angelos et inter Christum et nos commendat divinae charitatis abundantiam, quod Christum non solum secundum spiritum, sed etiam secundum carmen fratrem nostrum fecerit, ita ut idem ipse simul sit melior angelis, similis et nobis propinquior quam angeli."

> Moreover, he says "the worlds also," in the plural, although there seems to be only one world. Perhaps it is his purpose to show that Christ is the Author of all worlds, that is, of all times. And so "world" can properly be taken to mean 100 years, as one says; but it is better understood as having designated two ages, namely, the present and the future … But the created angels are in the future age. And so man, according to the body of this life, is in the present age. According to his soul, however, he is in the future age. For he embraces, and participates in, both.[31]

What is clear here is that Luther means 'present' and 'future' in a way that is not only – perhaps not at all – temporal. Rather, we can extrapolate a connection between 'present' and 'physical' versus 'future' and 'spiritual.' We can then take his comments to mean that Luther believes a human being to be a composite of both physical and spiritual aspects, in contrast to the angels, whom are merely spiritual.

Having just made a statement highlighting a significant difference between humanity and the angels, Luther follows by making a statement about an important similarity and connection between them, during his interpretation of verse 1:3. He is considering what it means when the apostle describes Christ as "the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance." Luther says that this brightness is in fact the image of God, a light in which the Father recognizes Himself – which makes the second half of the verse redundant. Thus, Christ, as the image of the Father, shines with the glory by which God knows His own substance. More importantly for our purposes, he goes on to say that humans and angels *both* are images of God, but not in the same way: the knowledge of God expressed in the image as it exists in humans and angels is communicated to their benefit – not God's – so that they can come to know God by

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[31] LW 29.110; WA 57.III.98; "Dicit autem in plurali 'et secula', cum videatur unum tantum esse, forte ut ostendat Christum omnium seculorum id est temporum authorem. Et ita potest 'seculum' accipi proprie, ut dicitur, pro centum annis, sed melius intelligitur ipsum duo notasse secula, scil. presens et futurum … Sunt autem in futuro seculo angeli creati, et ita homo secundum corpus seculorum est in seculo presenti, secundum animam autem [in] seculo futuro. Utrumque enim capit et participat."

knowing the Image as it exists within them. So while humans and angels might be described as "His brightness and His figure," Christ is here described as "the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance," so that the reader might achieve a better understanding of the "proper figure of God."[32] Two interesting things are happening in this passage: first, we have language from Luther that reveals his scholastic training, with its focus on form and substance, and second, we see angels named as images of God, an assertion he will repeat in later years.

IV.1.2. 1526-1535

Luther's thoughts on the relationship between angels and humanity became more elaborate as his career continued. In contrast to the previous period, we find that he taught that humanity and the angels interact in a greater number of ways.

IV.1.2.1. Interaction

Once again, Luther mentions the celebration of the angels, this time at Christ's acts as humanity's Shepherd. When Christ returns to heaven, bearing the lost sheep, the angels — along with all saints and other creatures — rejoice.[33] Humanity also participates in the angels' ordering of creation, says Luther. He writes that God gathers both humanity and the angels to Himself, choosing to rule through them both, working

[32] LW 29.111; WA 57.III.100: "… et notandum, quod Grece non habetur hoc loco τύπος i. e. schema, quod 'figuram' proprie sonat, nec usia, quod 'essentiam' seu 'substanciam' significat, sed sic: caracther hipostaseos α[ὐτοῦ] i. e. 'signaculum, nota, forma' 'subsistencie seu substancie eius', non quod nobis sit figura substancie Dei, sed ipsimet Deo, ita quod solus Deus suam formam in ipso cognoscit. Unde non simpliciter dixit: 'splendor eius et figura eius' — nam et angeli et homines sunt imagines splendoris, signacula maiestatis Dei — sed dicit: 'splendor glorie et figura substancie eius', ut intimam et propriam figuram intelligamus Dei per eam. Nos enim sumus imagines Dei nobis pocius quam Deo, quia non Deus se per nos, sed nos Deum per nos cognoscimus."

[33] "Predigt auf dem Schlosse zu Wittenberg." Church Postils 4.95-6; WA 36.302: "Weil wir solchen Hirten sehen, durch jn selbs uns armen sundern fur gemalet, der sein Scheflin so ungerne verleuret und so sehnlich suchet, und wenn ers findet, mit allen freuden tregt und solche freude ausbreitet, das sich alle Engel und Heiligen, ja alle Creaturen dazu mit jm uber uns frewen und freundlich anlachen, das auch die Sonne mus viel lieblicher scheinen …"

together with them.[34] He also again highlights the brotherhood that humanity shares with the angels, such as in his commentary on Psalm 126, where he expressly refers to a Christian as a "brother of the angels."[35]

And not just brothers, but friends! However, this friendship does come with a condition: belief. If one believes in the Word and is hopeful, says Luther, not only will one have Christ as brother and God as father, but will also have all the angels as friends.[36] But the relationship between humanity and the angels is even closer than friendship. In his exegesis of Isaiah 64, he emphasizes that the heart of an angel is its service, and that their office is for our benefit, on our behalf. In fact, through reading his comments, one can conclude that Luther is practically in awe of the extent to which the angels wish to serve and support humanity. Not only will the angels be our guardians, but if we persist in Christ, we will see them in their true form and have them as ministers.[37] Commenting on the second chapter of Titus, he again emphasizes the extremity of the angels' good will towards us. He writes that they care for us to the point of slavery — and rejoice at being asked to do so. This level of care extends to all possible occasions.[38]

As in the previous period, we find that one of the ways in which the angels care for humanity is through offering comfort. However, in this period, Luther seems more concerned with angels as comforters of the spirit than of the body. In a sermon on

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[34] "Vorrhede Martini Luthers auff die weissagung des Johannis Lichtenbergers." WA 23.8: "Hat er doch zu sich genomen beyde seine Engel und uns menschen, durch wilche er wil regiren, das wir mit yhm und er mit uns wircke."

[35] "Psalmus CXXVI." WA 40.III.195: "Ille rex vite, frater angelorum est miserabilis persona, plena peccatis, tristitia et vexationibus in corde, abiectus coram mundo, quasi desperans de se."

[36] "Alius sermo D Martini super Euangelio Ioannis 20 de Magdalena." WA 32.90: "So gleube nur dem wort und sey hoffertig, … Christus wil dein bruder sein, so wil Gott dein vater sein, so mussen nu auch alle Engel deine freunde sein…"

[37] "Predigt am Sonntag Invocavit Nachmittags." WA 20.280: "Quando vicimus, **haben wir diß forteyl**, quod angeli accedunt in vera forma et apportarunt ei cibum. Sic si in Christo nos vinceremus, angeli nostri erunt ministri."

[38] "ANNOTATIONES LVTHERI IN EPISTOLAM PAVLI AD TITVM." WA 25.50: "Et ad servitutem meam respiciunt angeli et gaudent. 'In omnibus' iterum occurrit particulari servituti."

Genesis, Luther expresses his wish that we could see the extent to which God shows concern for us, by sending angels to care for us, even when we feel most forsaken. The angels descend and ascend, urge us on in life, and carry souls to heaven in death.[39] Thus, whenever one is afflicted, one must cry out to heaven and earth, to the angels and saints. God will comfort the sinner, releasing him or her from union with death, the Devil, and Hell.[40] And on one occasion, Luther preaches that the greatest comfort a Christian can know is that he or she is not alone in suffering the predations of the Devil or the pain that comes with life on earth. Interestingly, he also says in this sermon that the angels, along with Christ and the Father, suffer with them, accepting the suffering of the Christian as their own.[41]

We also find Luther returning to the story of Lazarus in Luke 16 as an example of angelic comfort. One particular instance was in a sermon given on the first Sunday after Trinity, in 1535. He is speaking on Luke 16:19-31, and Christ's story about Lazarus and the rich man. In that story, Luther sees the angels acting as Lazarus's sole means of support and comfort. He says that he would rather be Lazarus rather than the rich man; in fact, Luther says, "I would rather have an angel as a guardian and keeper than a hundred

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[39] "In Genesin Mosi librum sanctissimum D. Martini Lutheri Declamationes." WA 24.495: "Utinam et nos videremus apertis oculis, quantam de nobis curam habeat Deus, quam illi spiritus seu angeli respiciant in nos, cum sumus desertissimi: ideo enim nos Deus in carceres, in mala, in mortem detrudi sinit, ut etiam sic servare se posse et velle declaret. Descendunt angeli et ascendunt, agunt nobiscum in vita, animas suscipiunt in morte."

[40] "Das XVII. Capitel Johan." WA 28.183: "Denn wer wil einem menschen, der solchen trotz hat, abbrechen odder schaden, sintemal er weis, wenn er das kleinest leiden hat, so mus schreyen beide himel und erden, alle Engel und heiligen. Greiffet jhn eine sund an, die das gewissen wil erschrecken, beissen, druecken und mit dem Teuffel, tod und helle drawet, so sagt Gott mit dem gantzen hauffen: Liebe sund, las mir jhn ungebissen, tod ungewuerget, helle ungefressen."

[41] "Das XVII. Capitel Johan." WA 28.151: "Das ist (sage ich) der hoeheste trost jn allen leiden der Christen, wo sie vom Teuffel angefochten odder von der wellt angriffen werden, das sie nicht allein leiden, sondern die gantze Christenheit auff erden, ja alle Engel jm himel sampt Christo und dem Vater selbs sich jhres leidens annemen und mit tragen und jhn nichts widerfaren kan, es mus jhn allen widerfaren."

Roman emperors with all their might."[42] On a separate occasion, Luther preaches that the angels saw Lazarus, and instead of being repulsed by the sores that covered his body, they descended and comforted him. In the face of his ugliness and uncleanliness, their own beauty did not matter; the angels' conduct here should serve as an example for Christians, Luther says. And Christians should take heart, regardless: even if there is no one to help one to wash or to clothe oneself, the angels will be there to do so. We may not see them, but if we trust in the truth, we will eventually understand — especially after death.[43]

IV.1.2.2. Imitation

In this period, we also find Luther expanding on the idea of humanity interacting with the angels as examples to imitate. However, his focus remains the ways in which human preaching and ministry should resemble or mirror that of the angels'.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one major aspect of Luther's understanding of the message that the angels bring is that it is God's Word, not their own. Thus, as he points out in a sermon during this period, when God speaks, God can use many mouths, each of which can enter the heart. When we hear the angels, we are hearing the words

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[42] House Postils 2.233; "Predigt am 2. Sonntag nach Trinitatis." WA 41.297: "**Da leit Lazarus, die Engel sitzen da und sehen auff in,** siquidem divites nolunt, **So ich wechseln solt,** mallem Lazarus esse quam dives, Mallem unum angelum habere custodem quam 100 Caesares…"

[43] "Predigt am zweiten Sonntag nach Trinitatis." WA 27.207: "Quid gloriosius, si unus angelus te portat, qui plus quam Turca et omnes reges? Non solum inspexerunt Lazarum angeli, sed descendunt et fiunt eius ministri et non abhominantur eius hulcera, famen, non inspiciunt suam pulchritudinem, quam habent coram deo. Quid nos miseri madensack hic dicemus, qui uns weren,ne serviamus eim Lazaro? Quid esset, si Turca vel rex Franciae veniens procideret ad genu meum? Certe magna res, et tamen nihil ad angeli ministerium. Si nos omnia fecerimus cum Lazaris, dicamus: omnia fecimus, 'servi inutiles'. Vide quid angeli: du bist noch lang so schon nicht als ein engel. Et illi nos confundunt. Consolatione plenum: Si nemo vult me lavare, vestire, habeo angelos. Sed non video, sed nec ille vidit. Si vero credis, senties et post mortem praesertim."

that God speaks; the same is true if we were to hear Peter, Paul and others, Luther says.[44] Even the Pope or the Bishop, when acting and preaching in their Apostolic offices, should be welcomed as God's angel in the same way that Paul was welcomed by the Galatians, [45] says Luther.[46]

As to whom best typifies this angelic preaching, Luther once again names John the Baptist. Luther wants to make a point to his audience: that John the Baptist is equal to the angels in some way by virtue of their similar office. And if there is doubt on this point, Luther himself makes the case even more strongly in 1533, in another sermon on Matthew 11:

> This is what Christ is saying to the Jews: You perceive John the Baptist to be a reed, a man in soft clothing, or at best, a prophet. But he is no reed, nor a fop in soft garment, nor a prophet. I want to describe him to you very graphically: he is the angel of the Lord who precedes the Lord. Just as a herald precedes the prince and says, "Give way, make room," just so, John the Baptist is the herald or forerunner of the prophesied King and Messiah.[47]

However, in this period, Luther also points to another biblical figure as being particularly angelic: Mary, the Mother of God. Speaking about the Virgin Mary in a 1527 sermon on the Annunciation, Luther describes the life she lived as "angelic," despite her existence in the flesh, and thus, he believes living an angelic life is possible. However, he is less

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[44] "Das XVII. Capitel Johan." WA 28.170: "Darumb muessen wir zu faren und S. Peter und Paulus und alle ander die solch zeugnis haben, auf den mund sehen, das sich dein hertz so gewis darauff verlasse und so viel gelten lasse, als horestu alle Engel von himel, ja Gott selbs mit eigner stim reden."

[45] Galatians 4:14: "… though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus." (NRSV)

[46] "Das XVII. Capitel Johan." WA 28.172: "So las nu (wie gesagt) Bapst und Bischoff auch solch ampt und predigt treiben und volfueren wie die Apostel (weil sie es doch haben und darinn sitzen), so wollen wir sie mit allen ehren annemen und auff den henden tragen als Gottes Engel, ja als Christum selbs, wie die Galater S. Paulus ehreten."

[47] House Postils 1.74; "Predigt am 3. Adventssonntag (im Hause)." WA 37.210: "Ideo dicit: dico vobis: non est arundo, Non propheta, **Jch wil euch jn bas malen**, Ipse est, qui praecedit, angelus domini ut is, qui praecedit principem, et dicit: credite."

optimistic that he — and by implication, the average person — would be able to live one, and he bemoans our inability to imitate it.[48]

What, then, are the characteristics of the angels' existence that humanity should emulate? During this stage of his career, Luther now seems less concerned that humanity would try to 'achieve' holiness by imitating them, and more concerned that his listeners look to them as guides for living in peace with one another. Humility is the primary attribute that he names. The angels are a perfect example of humility, preaches Luther. Speaking on St. Stephen's Day, he emphasizes the humility of the angels as an example for all people. There has never been a human being, he says, who has been as humble as an angel.[49] Their humility is directed towards us, and thus, we should love them instead of fearing them — and act in a similar way towards our fellow humanity: with love and humble service.[50]

IV.1.2.3. Transformation

Yet there are ways in which humanity can pass beyond merely imitating the angels and into a deeper similarity and connection with them, to the extreme of becoming almost angelic. Luther makes this case again and again in this period. For example, he preaches that Christians can approach "citizenship" with the angels. How might this occur? Remission of sins is one way though which humanity becomes more like the angels,

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[48] "Predigt am dritten Weihnachtsfeiertag früh." WA 23.743: "Scriptura de virgine beata: Angelicam vitam duxerat, dum praeter carnem in carne vixit, qui caste. Ego pro vita angelica habeo, qui sic vivere potest, ut illi canunt et divina … Ideo tam alta cantilena ista, ut nemo canet in terra, maneat angelica cantilena. Si solum possemus nachamen."

[49] "Predigt am 2. Weihnachtsfeiertag nachmittags." WA 29.680: "Ideo discamus exemplum humilitatis in angelis et cognitionem multo maiorem homine et tamen relinquit deo honorem, quid ego? Vides, quod nullus homo in terris qui ita **demutig** ut angelus ..."

[50] "Predigt am 2. Weihnachtsfeiertag nachmittags." WA 29.681: "Ideo angelorum humilitas erga humanam. Ideo ex corde diligere debemus angelos, ut non **fur yn entsetzen,** sed certi simus eos esse **umb uns** et servire cum omni gaudio."

preached Luther. One must have care to listen to what God says to him or her, and must also truly believe that Christ brings remission of sin — after which, one can be a truly holy and angelic person. From then on, whatever one does, one should keep one's life full of the laughter of the angels and the love of God in one's heart.[51] Instantaneously, though we had been servants of the devil and dwelt in Hell, we now receive citizenship with the angels, who have been armed guards on our behalf, and speak with us as our neighbors.[52]

Most often, such a transformation will occur after death. In a sermon given on St. Michael's Day in 1531, Luther describes the transition from this life to the next as the greatest leap, a death-leap, which we make while being supported by the angels.[53] And in a sermon on Luke 16:19 ff. (again, the story of poor Lazarus), Luther states that Christ Himself designates the office of the angels as carrying the souls of the saints to heaven.[54] Luther is happy to describe what humanity's existence after death will entail. Preaching on I Corinthians 15, Luther tells his followers that, while on earth, in this life, a human lives according to the same nature of life that Adam did. But in death, we cast off that manner and form. While we retain all of our natural attributes such as hands, feet, legs, fingers, etc., we nevertheless will no longer need to eat, drink, or sleep. But after this life, our bodies will burst with a light as bright as the sun and fly rather than walk — just like

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[51] "Marpurg. 5 Octob: Anno 1529" WA 29.581: "**Sed hab achtung drauff,** ad quid Deus te vocarit et ordinarit et crede te remissionem peccatorum per Christum habere, tum es vere sanctus et homo Angelicus. Et quicquid facis, **des lachen die Engel und** vita tua **gefelt Got im hertzen.**"

[52] "Predigt am Stephanstage." WA 36.402: "Et **komen n**u ad istos homines, qui prius in inferis **und knecht** diaboli, venimus ad **burgerschafft** angelorum, qui nostri **lantzleut**, ut cum eis loqui et ipsi nobiscum, ut vicinus pater cum filiis et familia."

[53] "Predigt am Michaelistag, nachmittags." WA 34.II.272: "Sic cum angelis, quando **kompt yhnn das hohe stueck,** ut hic non **regirn,** sed quando **sollen uns helffen den grossen sprung, ja mordsprung thun ex hac vita in aliam."**

[54] "Dominica 2. De divite et Lazaro." WA 34.I.530: "Sufficit scire pios credentes et misericordes ab angelis post mortem vehi ad celos. Hic indicat Christus officium angelorum."

the angels.[55] In keeping with the prior tradition, Luther even writes that after death, humanity may join the choirs of the angels, even perhaps surpassing them in holiness and purity.[56]

Likewise, the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16 provides another occasion for comment on the future life. The transition to the future life in heaven, Luther preaches, is not a matter of mere cessation of bodily needs: it is a matter of completion. In the future life, there will be no parents, preachers, or food — those who are there will be near to the angels. This is the fundamental article of the future life, he says, which is neglected by the world: that there humanity will be with the angels. Also, this angelic presence is unique for humanity. Cows, oxen, and other livestock do not receive the presence of the angels at their deaths, he points out. But Lazarus receives the angels as helpers, while the rich man does not, revealing the beauty of life for a lower man versus the lesser life the rich man lives. One's earthly life, therefore, can be a life of eternity or damnation, even before passing into the future life.[57]

As to the *Lectures on Zechariah*, our major example text from this period, we do not find any actual commentary from Luther as to the angels' relationship with humanity

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[55] "1. Cor. 15. Prima februarii 33." WA 36.671: "**Irdisch bild i. e. das naturlich leben i. e. die weise, die Adam gefurt hat in seinem leben, die furen wir auch. Durt wollen wir** istam **weise und gestalt ablegen, nicht furen.** Omnia membra quidem retinebimus. Sed non **so essen, trinken, schlafen**, sed erit corpus **so leicht**, **hel** ut sol, ut non eat, sed **flieg, und so leicht** ut sol, angeli." Cf. "Predigt am Tage St. Johannis (im Hause)." WA 37.247: "… sed **wir werden jnn den lufften fliegen,** sicut stellae, angeli …"

[56] "Enarratio in I. Cap. Genesis per reverendum Patrem dominum D. Mart. Lutherum in Schola Wittembergensi." WA 42.81: "Cum autem post hanc miseram vitam veniemus ad choros Angelorum, tum sanctius et purius hos cultus praestabimus."

[57] "Predigt am zweiten Sonntag nach Trinitatis, nachmittags." WA 34.I.532-3: "Summa: **Es ist alles uff den bauch gestelt.** Sed futura vita **uff das ist mehr gestellt.** Ibi non erunt parentes, praedicatores, alimoniae, sed aderunt angeli. Ergo sic discamus fundamentum articuli de futura vita, qui negligitur in mundo **und wyl bey uns eynreyssen.** Nam si non est alia futura vita, nulli essent angeli. **Den es stehet nicht** angelos adesse, si vacca aut animal aliud moritur, sed in morte pii Lazari **do seindt engel an vaters und predigers stadt &c.. Die kue, esel, ochs darff keynes engels nicht.** Sed hic Lazarus illorum auxilio utitur et dives hoc non habet. Sequitur ergo, **das eyn schoner leben ist vor die frummen und eyn geringer leben vor die boßen.** Ergo bonum est hunc locum esse testimonium vitae eternae et damnacionis, scilicet qui ante vixerunt, esse in alia vita."

in the way that we have been discussing it here. Instead, Luther's focus is on the role of the angels in the larger order of creation; his exploration of the angel-human relationship is encompassed within that perspective in that text.

IV.1.3. 1536-1545

As we move into the final period of Luther's life, we find that his thoughts on the relationship between angels and humanity tend more towards considering and prioritizing transformation, rather than the other types of relation we have explored thus far.

IV.1.3.1. Interaction

Not to say that Luther does not touch on these other aspects. In a sermon given at the Vigil of the Incarnation, Luther preached that the angels support us against anything that would attempt to murder or enslave us.[58] And as we have seen, Luther was convinced that the angels do speak to humanity's inner heart. He returns to this topic in a sermon given on St. Michael's Day, where he preaches that the angels are able to influence humanity, not by 'creating' any sort of thought or impulse, but instead by directing them.[59] But he takes this fact a step further by placing it within the framework of relationship. Regarding this influence, he continues, humanity confirms them in this office through its breath and in the beating of its hearts.[60]

Outside of the *Lectures on Genesis*, to which we will turn in a moment, Luther says little about the ministry of comfort the angels offer us. In one sermon, he characterizes Isaiah as specifically needing comfort in the midst of his despair (in Isaiah 6:5-6), at

[58] "Predigt am Tage vor Mariä Verkündigung." WA 49.55: "… **was nicht verfuret wird und ermordet, wird erhalten** per Angelos bonos."
[59] "Predigt am Michaelistage." WA 47.855: "Sic Angeli utuntur longe melius Creaturis quam nos. Corda hominum **konnen anblasen,** ut diligant mutuo, voluntatem non creant, sed **koennen lencken**."
[60] "Predigt am Michaelistage." WA 47.856: "Hoc est offitium Angelorum, quod homines confirmant **mit innerlichen anweben und anhauchen** vel intus in cor vel **&c.**."

which point the angel comes to comfort him and assure him that all of his sins are forgiven.[61] Likewise, he also does not speak as much about the distinctions between Christ, humanity, and the angels. The one theme that again repeats itself is his placing importance on the fact that Christ became incarnate as a human being, rather than an angel. This fact must be a continuous shock to the believer, Luther preaches:

> Dear God, how shall I exalt myself so highly as to boast of being God's bride, and God's Son my bridegroom? How do I, a poor, offensive worm of the dust, come to this honor, which never befell the angels in heaven, that the eternal Majesty condescends so very low into my poor flesh and blood and thoroughly unites himself with me, that he will be one body with me, and yet I am from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head so completely full of filth, leprosy, sin, and stench before God; how shall I then be considered the bride of the high eternal and glorious Majesty and be one body with him?[62]

However, in a sermon given in 1544 on the angels, Luther does bring up for the first time an interesting distinction between the angels and humanity in respect to Christ — specifically, how each type of creature is redeemed. There Luther teaches that even though the angels do not benefit from Christ's blood or death in the way that humanity does, they are nevertheless redeemed "by the blood of the lamb." The angels preach and

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[61] Church Postils 5.46; "Euangelium am XIII. Sontag nach Trinitatis. Luce x." WA 22.246: "Des gleichen der prophet Esaia vj. Da er fur Gott stehet und sihet seine herrligkeit, bekennet er, das er unrein ist, und mus von einem Engel getroest werden, das seine suende von jm genomen seien etc."

[62] Church Postils 5.243; "Euangelium des XX. Sontags nach Trinitatis, Matth. XXII." WA 22.339: "Denn es ist der vernunfft so gar frembd, das sie auch dafur erschrickt, wenn sie es sol bedencken, wie gros es ist, Jch rede jtzt noch von den Christen, denn die andern komen hie zu nicht, haltens schlecht fur unmoeglich, ja fur lauter Narrenteidung und fabeln, wo sie hoereten sagen, das Gott solt eines menschen Breutgam sein, Aber die Christen, so es anfahen zu gleuben, mussen sich fur der groesse entsetzen und wundern: Lieber Gott, wie sol ich mich so hoch erheben, das ich mich sol rhuemem Gottes Braut und Gottes Son meinen Breutgam, Wie kome ich armer stinckender Madensack zu den grossen ehren? welche auch den Engeln im himel nicht widerfaren ist, das sich die ewige Majestet so gar tieff erunter lesst in mein armes fleisch und blut und so gar mit mir vereiniget, das er auch ein Leib mit mir sein wil, Bin ich doch so gantz von dem fus bis an die scheitel vol unflats, blatern, grinds, aussatzs, suende und stanck fur Gott? Wie sol ich denn der hohen, ewigen, herrlichen Majestet Braut und ein Leib mit jr heissen?"

bear witness to their belief in the lamb — that is what redeems them, preaches Luther. This testimony is also what drove the Devil from heaven.[63]

IV.1.3.2. Imitation

This idea of testimony naturally leads us to our next aspect of relationship: imitation. As before, Luther makes the case that preaching God's Word is an angelic act. In a sermon on St. Stephen's Day, he points to Psalm 97:7, drawing a connection between preaching and the angels. Paul, Peter, the angels — anyone who preaches a sermon is a "mouth" of God. All of these angels adore Christ, and this adoration wells forth through their sermons.[64] Preaching and witnessing are not the only activities by which humanity can imitate the angels, according to Luther. While God certainly has God's own armies and angels, sometimes humanity can fill those roles. In that same 1544 sermon on the angels, Luther preaches that we are God's angels and "war-people." Nevertheless, this war is waged through teaching and speaking God's Word. In the Bible, angels preach, act as bishops — in fact, anyone who is lead by God's Word to speak to others of Christ's kingdom and lead them to belief is an angel. Thus, humanity can be angels of faith according to this definition.[65] After living the battle that is the reality of human existence,

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[63] "Predigt am Michaelistage." WA 49.577: "Angeli non habent sanguinem nec Christus pro eis mortuus. Sed isti sunt redempti 'per sanguinem agni'. … Angeli **zeugen, predigen** et credunt in agnum, per quem redempti, et isto testimonio **schlagen sie den Teuffel aus dem himel.**"

[64] "Predigt am Tage Stephani, nachmittags." WA 46.525: "Non ergo solus Petrus, Paulus, sed etiam Angeli concionantur, **So viel herrn predigen, die alle Ja zu der predigt sagen unnd sindt alle botschafften gottes.** 'Adorabunt eum omnes Angeli', dicitur in psalmo. **Das ist erfullet heut,** Adorant omnes Angeli, quotquot sunt, istum infantem, probant enim sua concione et Cantilena. Non ergo nos sumus inventores huius doctrinae, **es ist nicht von geringen leutten gegangen diese predigt."**

[65] "Predigt am Michaelistage." WA 49.581: "Etsi pura doctrina, sumus eius Angeli et **kriegsleute &c.**. Sic ipse habet etiam Angelos et exercitus. **Das heisst des Teuffels heer. Engel** in hoc libro **prediger, Bischove, prediger** et qui Dei verbum **furen,** quia loquitur de regno Christi, **das im Got der vater befolhen hat zufueren im glauben**. Nos Angeli fidei ut illi visionis."

God receives the faithful as angels. Luther says that he himself believes and preaches this fact gladly, that Christ walks with humanity and that we will be His angels.[66]

Correctly preaching and teaching God's Word is therefore all-important. In a sermon on John 10, Luther even holds the angelic life up in contrast with that of the Papacy, saying that even if the Pope lived an angelic life, he should still be condemned for what he teaches.[67] Following from his earlier, similar statements, we see that while he believed that though imitation, humanity can actually live an angelic life, Luther also maintained his ever-present conviction that the angelic activities themselves were useless apart from a properly formed heart.

IV.1.3.3. Transformation

And if one has such a heart? What then? Luther's most intriguing thoughts during this period, on the subject of angelic-human relationships, tie into these questions by considering transformation. At the beginning of Creation, transformation was not necessary for humanity to exist as the angels do. Humanity was created in a state of eternal justification and eternal life, Luther preached in 1538, so that we might live eternally with God among the angels.[68] Even though we have lost the initial status we had in the Garden, Luther remained optimistic that we can still achieve it here on earth. He

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[66] "Predigt am Michaelistage." WA 49.583: "Sic nostra vita nihil aliud quam pugna, suscepit nos **zu Engeln.** Libenter velim credere et praedicare, ut alii credunt, quod Dei filius homo factus **und sich so nahe zu uns gethan,** qui dicit, quod sim eius Angelus."

[67] Church Postils 3.58; "Euangelium des andern Sontags nach Ostern. Johan. X." WA 21.328: "Darumb haben wir auch das Bapstumb gestraffet und angefochten, nicht, das sie boeslich und schendlich leben (welchs auch sie selbs bekennen muessen), Sondern also sagen wir jnen, Wenn sie auch ein heilig Engelisch leben fuereten, welches sie doch nie gethan noch jmer mehr thun werden, und hielten nicht allein jr eigen, sondern auch Mose Gesetz, welches doch beides auch unmueglich, So halten wir sie nicht allein nicht fur Mietling, sondern fur Wolffe selbs, Weil sie nichts leren, denn das die Seelen toedtet. Denn die Seelen kan nichts weiden noch lebendig machen, was nicht die Lere Christi ist …"

[68] "Predigt am 5. Januar." WA 46.129: "Iusticia et vita, ad quam homo creatus, eterna. Cum ergo habemus ista, oportet maneamus heredes. Non creati ut porcus &c.. sed ut in eternum viveret, ut dictum ad Adam: 'in quacunque'. Ideo creatus ad eternam iusticiam, vitam i. e. quod sit dei filius, cum eo et anglelis vivat in eternum."

preached in a sermon given on the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity that something deep happens in a one's life when that person becomes a Christian. Pointing towards the words of Paul, he says that one's faith transforms [*schaffen*] one into a new person, and goes on to equate that new state with that of the prelapsarian Adam. We find a parallel with Chrysostom when Luther writes that before the fall, Adam was in harmony with God, both psychically (in the heart and mind) and physically (not subject to evil or lust)[69] — a perfect reflection of God. He then draws an equivalence with the angels, saying that "… the lives and natures of the holy spirits the angels are wrapped up in God and represent true knowledge of him, assurance, and joy in him and utterly pure and holy thoughts and works according to the will of God."[70]

As we have seen, Luther thought that this transformation puts the believer in a strange state, living a life that stretches beyond earth and into heaven. In 1539, Luther preached about humanity's peril (particularly Christians') as beings caught between two worlds. To his mind, Peter's call to watchfulness in I Peter 5:5-11[71] illustrates this danger. The Christian no longer lives entirely on earth, having been transported into a heavenly life in the same way as the patriarchs — such as Adam, Abel, and 'others.'

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[69] Cf. Chrysostom, "Homily 15," *Homilies on Genesis* I.203, footnoted above.

[70] Church Postils 8.310; "Am XIX. Sontag nach Trinitatis, Epistel. Ephes. IIII." WA 22.316: "Aber was rechte Christen sind, die sind von Gott also geschaffen (spricht S. Paulus) durch den Glauben an Christum zu einem newen Menschen, der Gotte ehnlich, warhafftig, fur jm gerecht und heilig ist, Wie erstlich Adam in seinem hertzen fein auffgericht gegen Gott und in rechter froelicher zuversicht, liebe und lust, und auch der leib heilig und rein, von keiner boeser, unreiner oder unordenlicher lust nichts wuste, Und war also das gantze leben des Menschen ein schoen bild und spiegel, darin Gott selbs leuchtet, Gleich wie auch der heiligen Geister, der Engel, leben und wesen ist, eitel Goettlich ding, warhafftige Gottes erkentnis, sicherheit, freude gegen Gott, und eitel reine heilige gedancken und werck nach Gottes willen."

[71] "In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen." (NRSV)

Unlike Enoch, who was transported bodily into Heaven, these men continued to live on earth as well as in Heaven. Christians therefore do likewise: while they are no longer beholden to Satan, they still remain on earth, exposed to all sorts of danger from the Devil, against whom they must struggle. This struggle, says Luther, is the price of abiding in the heavenly life; if there was no struggle, then humanity would be living in Paradise. Only on the Last Day will the fight against the Devil end, when he receives his punishment. Also on that day, the veil between humanity and the angels will also be removed.[72]

One aspect of this 'veil' that will disappear is the differences between how and what the angels know, and how and what humanity knows. Luther made a distinction between the angels' desire to know God and humanity's in a sermon from the Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity, 1536. There, he preached that according to I Peter 1:12,[73] the angels never become tired or satisfied of learning that which is preached and revealed to humanity.[74] Humanity, therefore, should not desire these things any less; in fact, humanity should desire complete knowledge of God's will even more strongly than do

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[72] Church Postils 8.77-8; "Am dritten Sontag nach Trinitatis, Epistel. I. Pet. V." WA 22.37: "Darumb gehoeret hiezu ein ander wehre und schutz und ein ander nuechterkeit und wachen, das man fur diesem blutgirigen Moerder moege unbeschedigt und unverschlunden bleiben, Davon redet hie S. Petrus mit dem heufflin der Christen und spricht: Jr seid nu durch Christi blut und tod des Teufels luegen und mord entlauffen, lebendig gemacht und ins himlische wesen gesetzt, Gleich ewern lieben Vetern, Adam, Habel etc. die nicht mehr unter der luegen und mord sind, sondern in Christo leben, ob wol der Leib ein zeit lang in der erden ligt, und warheit und Leben beide, an jrem Leib und Seel wider ergentzet mus werden. Aber weil jr noch in der Welt lebt, seid jr noch in aller fahr, Denn jr seid noch mit dem Leibe in des Moerders Haus und Herberge, Darumb muesset jr euch wol fursehen, das er euch nicht widerumb toedte und morde die Seelen, so in diesem sterblichen Leibe wonen. Es sol euch keinen schaden thun, das die Seele ist verderbt gewest, und der Leib noch dem Tod unterworffen ist, Denn ich lebe (spricht Christus) und jr solt leben, Allein, das jr darob kempffet, damit jr in der warheit und leben bleibet, Dazu seid jr gesetzet, weil jr hie auff Erden lebt, sonst weret jr schon im Paradis. Aber der Teufel ist noch nicht gar zur straffe seiner verdamnis verstossen bis an den Juengsten tag, da er endlich wird aus den lufften und von der Erden in abgrund der Hellen geworffen, nicht mehr wird koennen uns anfechten und kein Wolcke noch decke mehr zwischen uns und Gott, sampt den Engeln, sein wird."

[73] "It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look!" (NRSV)

[74] Cf. Chrysostom, "Homily 1," *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John,* NPNF I.14.2, footnoted above.

the angels. But until we pass into the everlasting life, we can only receive a mere glimpse of such truth.[75] Expanding on this same point, Luther again relies on I Peter 1:12 in a 1542 sermon given on the Third Sunday after Easter. What is different is that he delves more deeply into actual angelic cognition. Again, while humanity must rely on words to convey the meaning and truth of the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Assumption, the angels behold and understand it completely. Luther describes the manner in which the angels know these truths as being *de cognitione objectiva*, meaning knowledge gained in an instant. Significantly, he points out that this is the way in which humanity will know these things after death. By contrast, humanity in the physical life has only 'practical knowledge,' *cognitio practica*, gained through faith. But in the next life, faith will not be necessary for this understanding — humanity will know these truths in the same manner as do the angels.[76]

Therefore, this transformation will be most completely realized after death. Luther preached that in heaven, humanity will lose the sight to which it is accustomed. Instead,

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[75] Church Postils 8.364; "Am XXIIII. Sontag nach Trinitatis, Epistel. Coloss. I." WA 22.379: "Denn auch die lieben Engel im Himel des nicht sat werden (wie S. Petrus sagt), sondern haben jr ewige freund und lust daran, das sie es moegen schawen, das uns offenbart und gepredigt wird .j. Petri.j. Darumb wo nicht auch bey uns ist dieser hunger und durst (Wie wir doch viel mehr solten haben weder die Engel) solches reichlich und voellig zu begreiffen, bis wir es auch moegen ewiglich schawen in jenem leben, Da ist noch nicht mehr davon denn ein blosser lediger schawm, so weder trencken noch settigen, weder troesten noch bessern kan."

[76] Church Postils 3.98-9; "**Predigt in der Woche nach dem Sonntag Jubilate." WA 49.257: "Und S. Petrus sagt j. Petri j., es werde solch ding darin fuer gegeben und geschrieben, das auch die Engel satt und gnug daran zu sehen haben, an dem grossen werck, das Christus, Gottes Son, mensch worden, den tod am Creutz gelidden, aber wider Aufferstanden und nu zur rechten hand des Vaters sitzet, ein Herr uber alles, auch nach der menschlichen Natur, und seine Kirche regiret und erhelt wider des Teuffels zorn und aller Welt gewalt, Da von wir wol die wort hoeren, Sie aber (die Engel) sehen und verstehens und haben jr ewige freud daran, Und wie sie es in ewigkeit nicht gnug sehen koennen, Also koennen wir es viel weniger gnug verstehen, Denn es ist ein unvergenglich, unaussprechlich, unermesslich und unerschepflich werck.**

Dis ist noch gesagt De cognitione obiectiva**, Das ist: so mans ansihet mit einem Blick, wie es die Engel ansehen und wir in jenem Leben sehen werden, Aber in diesem Leben muessen wir hievon einen andern verstand haben, welches heisst Cognitio practica, das wir erkennen lernen, was die krafft dieses wercks ist, und was es vermag, Welchs geschicht durch den Glauben, der in jenem leben auff hoeren wird, da wirs auch werden in volligem anschawen erkennen.**"

we will see in the same way that the angels see, and enjoy the same bliss as they do.[77] While remaining flesh and blood, our bodies will be as light as the angels, filled with joy.[78]

IV.1.3.4. *Lectures on Genesis*

Just as it did for our previous two questions regarding Luther's angelology, the *Lectures on Genesis* also present complex answers to questions regarding the human-angel relationship. Much of Luther's thought on the subject is centered on the events of the first three chapters, with the Creation and Garden narratives. For him, Adam's Fall from grace was a transformative, defining event that separated him from the angels in fundamental ways — which is what the majority of this section will address. But we will also find that he also dealt with issues regarding the angels' ministry of comfort, as well as the nature of the angels' participation in humanity's creation; we turn now to these issues.

When we examined the role of the angels in creation according to the *Lectures on Genesis*, we touched upon Luther's commentary on 17:1, in which he described the angel's persuasion of Hagar to return to Abraham's household. There, Luther characterizes it as lifting her spirits and encouraging her to return — in effect, comforting her. This is not the only instance in which he makes this argument; he comments in multiple places in his *Lectures on Genesis* that angels are often sent to comfort

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[77] "Predigt auf das Fest der Verkündigung Mariä." WA 45.51: "**Dort werden wir ewig dran zu schawen haben, und ewige freude und seligkeit** cum omnibus angelis **dran sehen. Weiter gibt ir** angelus **ein warzeichen.**"

[78] "Predigt am Sonntag Palmarum." WA 45.55: "Ibi omnia renovabuntur pulcherrime nec tam gravia corpora, sed tam levia ut angeli, et tamen vera caro et sanguis, idem corpus, quod nunc **voller freude."**

believers.[79] In Genesis 21, Luther sees God's comfort of Hagar in her excommunication as extending to all believers who feel cast out and cut off from God, provided that they, too, "acknowledge their sins and tremble before the judgment of God." He reminds his audience that God does not cast aside the truly repentant — and that if such people are unable to find comfort in their fellow humanity, God will send an angel to bring them solace.[80]

Furthermore, Hagar, Ishmael, and the other patriarchs and matriarchs were not the only ones in Scripture who needed comfort. In his comments on Genesis 45, Luther writes that Christ's disciples also had need of the same comfort, because they too had been afflicted by fear of God's anger and judgment. Christ Himself comforted them during His forty days with them, and "there were even appearances and sermons of angels."[81] Yet even Christ's comfort and presence could not completely soothe their troubled hearts, says Luther. Peter especially was distressed, so much so that the angel who announced Christ's Resurrection in Mark 16:7 mentions that the news be brought to him specifically — which Luther sees as necessary for him to be comforted.[82]

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[79] Regarding the angel's comforting of Hagar, see LW 3.63-5 (WA 42.593-5), LW 4.67 (WA 43.183), and especially LW 4.63: "Therefore the angel comes as a comforter and brings nothing but solace from God Himself."; WA 43.180: "Venit igitur consolator Angelus, nihil nisi consolationis verba ab ipso Deo adferens …"

[80] LW 4.57; WA 43.176: "Maxima igitur haec consolatio est omnium istorum, qui sentiunt se eiectos, hoc est, qui agnoscunt peccata sua, et trepidant a iuditio Dei. Non enim vult, nec potest tales abiicere, etsi talibus solatia hominum deessent, potius Angelum de coelis descendere necesse esset, qui afferret consolationem. Vocatur igitur Deus humilium Deus et afflictorum, qui linum fumigans non extinguit. Postquam vero fidutia carnis in Ismaele mortificata est, fit verus promissionis filius, et quod iure prius postulabat: non autem consequebatur, hoc nunc ex gratia ei contingit in extrema necessitate et desperatione."

[81] LW 8.43; WA 44.611: "Tantum difficultatis est in excitandis et confirmandis animis oppressis metu irae et iudicii divini. Quin Apostolos vide, cum quibus conversatur Christus quadraginta diebus confirmans et docens eos de regno Dei, et accesserant etiam Angelorum apparitiones, conciones, tamen non poterant satis firmiter acquiescere illis omnibus."

[82] LW 8.26; WA 44.598: "Videmus, quanta longanimitate et comitate Christus tractat suos discipulos post resurrectionem, quam blande eos compellet, ostendat eis manus et latus, ac palpandum, audiendum, videndum se praebeat, cibum una capiat ac dulcissima colloquia misceat, et tamen non possunt statim sese colligere. Et Angelus, cum iubet nunciari discipulis resurrectionem Christi, inprimis Petro indicari vult,

But while the angels are always present to offer comfort, their actions during the Creation event are in question. And as reluctant as Luther was to comment on when or how the angels were created, he is much more certain regarding one topic: he did not see the angels as in any way involved with the birth of humanity. In his exegesis of Genesis 1:26, Luther writes that he does not agree with those who would interpret the verse as a conversation between God and the angels for five reasons. First, God had not consulted the angels at any other point in the process of Creation. Second, why should the angels be concerned with humanity's creation? Third, God's use of the word 'we' denotes a conversation between equals (Luther says between "makers and creators"), which the angels are not. Fourth, humanity is definitely not created in the image of the angels. And fifth, both plural and singular pronouns are used here. To Luther, such usage is evidence of Moses' assertion of the trinitarian nature of God, not of a conversation between God and God's servants.[83]

Perhaps God was speaking to the angels, saying that Adam had been created as an angel? In commenting on Genesis 3:22, Luther names "Nicholas of Lyra and others" as subscribing to this idea. But according to him, they are incorrect. For one thing, God does not name Himself as an angel. For another, grammatically speaking, the 'us' in the phrase, 'He has become one of Us,' is what is stressed, not the 'one.' In any case, had

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propterea quod is in summis angustiis erat. Der kundt das עָבַצ wol declinirn. Ter negaverat Dominum, seipsum fuerat execratus, caeteri fugerant. Ideo necessario et opportune ab Angelo hoc addebatur: 'Et Petro', etc." On the same page, "For it is much more difficult to console an afflicted conscience than to wake the dead."; "Multo enim difficilius est consolari conscientiam afflictam, quam excitare mortuos."

[83] LW 1.57-8; WA 42.43: "Dicunt autem Iudaei Deum sic loqui cum Angelis, Item cum terra et aliis creaturis. Sed quero ego: Cur id non antea quoque fecit? Secundo: Quid pertinet ad Angelos hominum creatio? Tertio: Non nominat Angelos, sed simpliciter 'nos' dicit. Igitur de factoribus et creatoribus loquitur. Hoc certe non potest dici de Angelis. Quarto etiam hoc certum est: Nullo modo dici posse nos ad Angelorum imaginem creatos esse. Quinto: Utrunque hic ponitur 'faciamus' et 'fecit', in plurali et singulari, ideo clare et potenter significat nobis Moses intus et in ipsa divinitate et creatrice essentia inseparabilem et aeternam pluralitatem esse. Hoc ne portae quidem inferorum nobis adiment."

Moses meant that an angel was speaking — or that God was speaking on their behalf — he would have said so.[84]

Thus, Luther chooses not to spend further time discussing the objections of "the Jews" against a trinitarian reading of this passage. But he further expands on his interpretation while discussing the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:7-9. Regarding that particular story, he makes the point that only God possesses the power to confuse languages; such an act is outside the capabilities of any creature, including the angels. He concludes that, while they may be able to speak in human language with human speech, they can neither create nor destroy it. But what is even more interesting here for our purposes follows his reference back to the creation of humanity: "… we were not created in the likeness of the angels; but they, together with us, are the likeness of God."[85]

That Luther believed that angels and humans both possess the image of God should not be surprising; after all, he made this same assertion in both of the previous earlier in his life.[86] However, in reading his comments on the life and condition of prelapsarian Adam, we find that he draws continual comparisons between the two types of beings, highlighting their differences, certainly — but also emphasizing their similarities. In his thoughts on the prelapsarian Adam, we see his exploration of the transformational quality of the human-angel relationship.

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[84] LW 1.223; WA 42.166: "Cur Deus, qui unus est, loquator in plurali numero? Num plures Dii sint? Ac Nicolaus de Lyra cum aliis sentit haec dicta esse in persona Angeli vel ad Angelos: 'Factus est unus ex nobis', id est, Factus est Angelus. Sed nimis frigida glossa haec est. Non enim Deus se Angelum vocat. Nec vis posita est in nomine unus, posita magis est in pronomine 'Nobis'. Quare repudiemus hoc frigidum commentum. Si enim hoc dicitur in persona Angeli, certum est, Deum hoc non dixisse. At textus dicit: 'Et dixit Dominus Deus'."

[85] LW 2.227; WA 42.422: "Nec moramur cavillationes Iudaicas, qui nugantur Deum locutum cum Angelis. Non enim sumus ad Angelorum similitudinem conditi. Sed ipsi nobiscum sunt similitudo Dei. Quin sicut verba ostendunt, statuimus talem pluralitatem in Deo, quae sit indivisae substantiae, et individuae unitatis. Non enim Angeli possunt confundere linguas, est hoc Creatoris opus, is solus, sicut unitatem linguae dedit, eam mutare et tollere potest, creatura hoc non potest. Assumere linguam hominum possunt Angeli, sicut exempla Scripturae plurima testantur, Sed in homine eam nec creare, nec mutare possunt."

[86] In his *Lectures on Hebrews,* as previously discussed in IV.1.1.1.

Luther returns, in his commentary on Genesis 2:17, to a discussion of the fall of the angels, remarking that the idea of a battle and a rebellion of angels who chose to follow a charismatic, superior angel is in keeping with the traditions of the church fathers as well as with biblical evidence. But regarding the angelic capacity to sin and to fall itself, he says:

> Furthermore, since in passing we touched on the nature of the angels, it must not be concealed that there was a certain likeness between the state of the human being and that of the angels, a fact which the fathers mention in their writings. But this likeness must not be applied to procreation, which has no place in a spiritual being, but only to incompleteness. For just as I said that to man there had, as it were, been assigned a middle position, so also to the angels, as soon as they were created, were not so firmly established in their nature that they were incapable of sinning.[87]

One attribute that humans and angels share, therefore, is the capacity to sin. Luther also mentions the capability to procreate here as one of the ways in which humans and angels differ. But procreation also presents an illustrative facet of what Luther sees as the most significant difference between the two sets of beings: angels are pure spirit, humans are inextricably tied to physical existence. Following Paul, Luther writes in his exegesis of Genesis 2:7 that regardless of whether or not Adam had sinned, he would have needed food, drink, and sleep, he would have grown and procreated — in short, all that a physical body requires and performs. Such a life would have been Adam's lot, "until he would have been translated by God to the spiritual life…" There, Adam would have survived purely on "God alone" and not due to any intake of food or other nourishment.

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[87] LW 1.112; WA 42.85: "Porro quoniam obiter in mentionem de natura Angelorum incidimus, non dissimulandum est, quod Patres scribunt, similitudinem aliquam fuisse inter conditionem hominis et Angelorum. Sed haec similitudo neutiquam referenda est ad propagationem, quae in spirituali natura non est, sed ad imperfectionem. Sicut enim de homine constituto quasi in medium dixi, ita quoque Angeli, cum primum sunt conditi, non sunt ita constabiliti in sua natura, ut non possent peccare. Ideo Christus Ioannis octavo dicit non stetisse eum in veritate. Hinc imaginati sunt sancti Patres, ortam pugnam seu seditionem inter Angelos, quibusdam foventibus partes pulcherrimi Angeli, efferentis se ob certa dona super omnes. Verisimilia haec sunt, neque enim abludunt ab eo, quod Christus dicit, eum in veritate non stetisse, et quod Iudas dicit in sua Epistola deseruisse eos suum domicilium, et apostatasse."

Yet even then, Adam would have retained his physical body.[88] This translation, Luther writes, would have been a joyous occasion: "… by it Adam would have been translated to the spiritual life or, as Christ calls it in the Gospel, to the angelic life (Matthew 22:30), in which physical activities come to an end… And from the innocence of a child, so to speak, he would have been translated into the virile innocence which the angels have and which we, too, shall have in the future life."[89]

Luther is conscious, however, of the possible confusion that his description of 'translation' might cause. Death, it could be argued, is so similar as to be the same thing — both events feature a transformative transition from this world to a new one. Is there any real difference between them? Luther tackles this question by pointing his audience towards the punishment that God hands down to Adam: "On whatever day you will eat of the tree you will die." According to him, God here is saying that should Adam keep this commandment, he will continue to exist in the state in which he was created, until he is shifted into immortality. But disobeying will result in death and the loss of that coming immortality. This, then, is an excellent example of the difference between Adam's innocence and the angels' spiritual state. Adam could sin and thereby fall from a state that would have allowed him to achieve immortality and a translation to a life that did not allow for the possibility of sinning. By contrast, the angels — as they exist now — cannot

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[88] LW 1.86; WA 42.65: "Docet etiam Paulus, etiam si Adam non peccasset, tamen victurum fuisse corporalem vitam, indigam cibi, potus, quietis, crescentem, generantem etc., donec per Deum ad vitam spiritualem esset translatus, in qua vixisset sine animalitate, ut sic dicam, nempe ab intra, ex solo Deo, et non ab extra, sicut antea ex herbis et fructibus, Idque sic, ut tamen homo habeat carnem et ossa, et non sit mere spiritus, sicut Angeli sunt."

[89] LW 1.110-1; WA 42.84: "Nam hoc quoque per peccatum amisimus, quod nunc inter praesentem et futuram vitam tam horribile medium est, mors scilicet. In statu innocentiae fuisset id medium iucundissimum, quo ad spiritualem vitam translatus esset Adam, seu, ut Christus in evangelio appellat, ad Angelicam vitam, in qua animales actiones cessant. … et de innocentia, ut sic dicam, puerili esset translatus in innocentiam virilem, qualem habent Angeli, et nos quoque habituri sumus in futura vita."

fall. Thus, Luther argues, Adam occupies a middle state, not quite as immortal as the angels.[90]

As to the question of why God chose to place humanity in this middle state, Luther again[91] expresses his reluctance to pry into the mind of God. However, he does offer some significant commentary that further reinforces a sense of similarity between angels and humanity:

> The angels were not created in this [middle] condition; for they neither beget nor reproduce. They live a spiritual life. What is worthy of wonderment is God's plan in creating man, that although He had created him for physical life and bodily activity, He nevertheless added intellectual power, which is also in the angels, with the result that man is a living being compounded of the natures of the brute and of the angels.[92]

Especially significant here is Luther's emphasis on the sharing of intellectual power.

Perhaps the most striking similarity that prelapsarian humanity, as exemplified by Adam, and the angels share is in terms of their knowledge. In his exegesis of Genesis 1:27, Luther draws a comparison between Adam and the animals: the animals resemble God in the same way that God's footprints resemble God. Humanity, however, is truly God's Image and can be recognized as such, "because in [Adam] there is such wisdom, justice, and knowledge of all things that he may rightly be called a world in miniature. He

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[90] LW 1.111; WA 42.84-5: "Atque hoc significat haec poenae comminatio: Quacunque die comederis de ligno hoc, morieris. Quasi dicat: Potes quidem manere in vita, ad quam te condidi, et tamen non sic es immortalis, ut Angeli. Est vita posita ceu in medio; potes in ea manere et postea rapi ad inamissibilem immortalitatem. Contra, si non parueris, mortem incurres, et immortalitatem amittes. Ergo est magna differentia inter spiritualem Angelorum conditionem et Adae innocentiam. Angeli, un nunc sunt, non possunt cadere; Adam autem potuit cadere. Fuit enim in tali statu, in quo poterat fieri immortalis, (erat enim sine omni peccato) et ex puerili gloria in immortalem vitam transferri, in qua non posset posthac peccare."

[91] Cf. his comments on the creation of the angels in his exegesis of Genesis 1:6 (LW 1.23; WA 42.19).

[92] LW 1.112; WA 42.85: "Angeli non sic sunt conditi, non enim generant nec propagantur; vivunt enim spiritualem vitam. Dignum autem admiratione est consilium Dei in creando homine, quem cum condidisset ad animalem vitam et actiones corporales, addidit tamen potentiam intellictivam, quae in Angelis quoque est, ut sit homo mixtum animal ex brutali et angelica natura."

has an understanding of heaven, earth, and the entire creation."[93] Adam's knowledge is what sets him apart as the Image of God, according to Luther. Here is where we see similarity with the angels, who also possess intellectual power as well as the Image of God.

Luther is also clear, however, that much of what Adam lost in the Fall was tied to his intellectual power. Before the fall, Adam enjoyed such attributes as an "accurate knowledge" of his fellow creatures, virtue and honor, incredible powers of perception, and an "upright yet imperfect" will. Luther goes on to say that this perfection would not have come to Adam until he had passed from the physical life into the spiritual.[94]

However, Adam's reaction to the creation of Eve is what proves, for Luther, to be the starkest example of what humanity lost in the Fall. Prelapsarian Adam's intellect was such that he was able to recognize Eve — at first glance — as having come from his own flesh, even though he had been sleeping soundly the entire time God had been forming her.[95] In his exegesis of Genesis 2:23, Luther sees Adam's response to meeting Eve as not only a revelation from the Holy Spirit, but also as evidence of the extent of Adam's intellectual powers. In recognizing Eve as part of his own flesh, Adam reveals his own understanding of the nature of causality: he knows that God is the efficient cause [*causa*

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[93] LW 1.68; WA 42.51: "Nam in coeteris creaturis cognoscitur Deus ceu in vestigio, in homine autem, praesertim in Adamo, vere cognoscitur, quia in eo est sapientia illa, iusticia et omnium rerum cognitio, ut recte dicatur μικρόκοσμος. Intelligit enim coelum, terram et totam creaturam."

[94] LW 1.114-5; WA 42.87: "Deinde annumerandae hic sunt poenae originalis peccati. Nam originale peccatum recte vocatur, quicquid est deperditum de iis conditionibus, quas Adam, cum adhuc esset natura integra, habuit, quod fuit sagacissimo ingenio, ut qui Heuam statim intellexit carnem suam esse, et omnium creaturarum exactam noticiam habuit, quod fuit iustus, rectus, intellectu praestanti, voluntate recta, et tamen imperfecta. Nam perfectio differebatur post illam animalem vitam ad spiritualem."

[95] LW 1.113; WA 42.86: "Sicut illustre eius rei exemplum est: Cum Adam profundissimum somnum dormiret, et Deus ex costa eius conderet Heuam, statim, ut evigilat Adam, agnoscit opus Dei dicens: 'Hoc est os ex ossibus meis'. Hic an non excellens intellectus est, statim primo obtuitu intelligere et agnoscere opus Dei?"

efficiens] of his wife and marriage, and that a wife's final cause [*causa finalis*] is to be a "mundane dwelling place" for her husband.[96]

In the Fall, Adam lost the capability to know the efficient causes and the final causes of things, and thus, so did the rest of humanity. Luther points to his own consideration of himself as evidence, lamenting that he is able to discover neither his own beginning nor his own end, unless he turns away from knowledge towards belief. Thus, a knowledge that does not know efficient or final causes is comparatively pitiful, evincing the true horror of the Fall into sin. After all, says Luther, even a cow knows her own home and can recognize her door.[97] Had Adam remained in his prelapsarian state, he would not have needed to instruct future generations about their origins, in the same way Adam had not needed instruction as to Eve's nature. These generations would have known efficient and final causes. Instead, humanity now possesses nothing more than cattle have:[98]

> Thus our entire knowledge or wisdom is based solely on the knowledge of the material and formal cause [*causae materialis et formalis*], although in these instances, too, we sometimes talk disgraceful nonsense. The efficient and final cause [*causam efficientam et finalem*] we obvously cannot point out, especially — and this is a wretched situation — when we must

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[96] LW 1.136; WA 42.102: "… qui revelat istam sapientiam mundo adhuc ignotam, quod causa efficiens uxoris et coniugii sit Deus, finalis autem causa sit, ut uxor sit marito politicum habitaculum. Haec cognitio non simpliciter procedit ex sensu et ratione, sed est revelatio Spiritus sancti."

[97] LW 1.124; WA 42.93: "Dicit Aristoteles: Homo et sol generant hominem. Belle dictum sequere hanc sapientiam et eo devenies, ut statuas Hominem et solem esse aeternum ac infinitum. Nunquam enim invenies hominem, qui sit vel principium vel finis, sicut ego principium et finem meae personae non possum invenire, si certo scire id et non credere potius volo. Qualis autem sapientia, qualis noticia est ignorare causam finalem, et causam efficientem? Nam quod formae noticiam habemus, sic vacca novit domum suam, sic (ut Germanico proverbio dicitur) intuetur et agnoscit ostium. Apparet itaque hic quoque, quam horribilis lapsus sit peccati originalis, quo amisimus eam noticiam, ut neque principium nec finem nostri videre possimus."

[98] LW 1.128; WA 42.96: "Si itaque Adam perstitisset in innocentia, neutiquam fuisset opus admoneri posteros de sua origine, sicut non opus fuit, ut admoneretur Adam de conditione Heuae suae, ipse statim, cum eam intuetur, agnoscit, quod sit os ex ossibus suis et caro ex carne sua. Talis cognitio sui et aliarum creaturarum mansisset etiam in posteritate Adae. Omnes statim animadvertissent finalem et efficientem causam, de quibus nunc nihilo plus scimus quam ipsae pecudes."

> discourse or do some thinking about the world in which we exist and live, likewise about ourselves. Such pitiable and inadequate wisdom![99]

For Luther, the worst tragedy of the Fall is that humanity lost this "beautifully enlightened reason" and the congruence of the human will with the will of God and with God's Word.[100] The Image of God as it exists in humanity has become damaged, the knowledge of God and of other creatures has been lost, and humanity has even entered into an adversarial relationship with God. All of these failings, says Luther, should not be minimized — rather, they should be emphasized.[101]

In contrast, the angels possess knowledge of all four causes. Even the fallen angels — the devil included — retain this knowledge. The devil "knows the order of the causes," from those that are easily distinguishable in the present to those that can be extrapolated regarding the future. And such is his grasp of these causes that he is never wrong in his conclusions, "unless a good angel stands in the way."[102]

But it is also clear from reading Luther's *Lectures on Genesis* that he believed humanity and angels were closely enough linked that many of the patriarchs could be accurately called angelic. Noah, for example, possessed what Luther calls an "angelic

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[99] LW 1.124; WA 42.93: "Sic omnis nostra cognitio seu sapientia tantum est posita in noticia causae materialis et formalis, quanquam in his quoque nonnunquam turpiter hallucinamur. Causam efficientem et finalem plane non possumus ostendere, praesertim quod miserabile est, cum de mundo, in quo sumus et vivimus, item de nobis ipsis est disputandum aut cogitandum. Haec an non misera et egena sapientia est?"
[100] LW 1.141; WA 42.106: "Ostendunt autem haec, quam horribilis ruina Adae et Heuae fuerit, per quam amisimus pulcherrime illuminatam rationem et voluntatem conformem verbo et voluntati Dei."
[101] LW 1.142; WA 42.107: "Non itaque haec naturae multiplex corruptio extenuanda sed magis amplificanda est: Quod homo ab imagine Dei, a noticia Dei, a noticia aliarum creaturarum omnium, ab honestissima nuditate in blasphemias, in odium, in contemtum Dei, Imo quod plus est, in inimiciciam erga Deum lapsus est."
[102] LW 7.111; WA 44.381: "Deinde Diabolus etiam prophetandi per visiones et somnia facultatem sibi vendicat. Novit enim ordinem causarum, videt praesentes et instantes causas, inde colligit futuros eventus, Cernit odia et simultates principum, machinationes Caesaris, et inde raciocinatur secuturos motus in Germania, nec fallitur sane, nisi angelus bonus impediat."

chastity," in his exegesis of Genesis 5:32.[103] Abel, too, "[God] makes an angel and the first among all the saints." In his death, Abel is freed from sin and from the world, and serves as an example of righteousness throughout Scripture.[104] Luther also points to Jacob. Despite the reality that they turned out to be patricides and fratricides, Jacob taught his household the Word. "Joseph alone is an angel…," clinging to faith, hope, love, and the Word despite the predations of the Devil:[105]

> Thus here Jacob is completely an angel. Indeed, he is an illustrious preacher of the Godhead who makes known before his descendants and heirs the true force of the promise and the blessing of God. For he has regard for his descendants, not according to the flesh but principally according to the spirit and faith.[106]

But while angelic Jacob remained on earth, one angelic patriarch did not: Enoch. In his exegesis of Genesis 5:21-24, Luther writes that though they had first suspected foul play, Enoch's children learned (through the intervention of an angel[107]) that he had been brought into heaven by God.[108] Their joy was absolute upon learning that Enoch had been

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[103] LW 1.356; WA 42.262: "Sic brevibus quidem verbis maximas res Moses ostendit, et quod imperitus Lector non animadvertet, cum de castitate nihil videtur loqui, celebrat castitatem Noah supra omnium castitatem, qui fuerunt in primo et originali Mundo, ut sit exemplum angelicae castitatis."

[104] LW 1.245; WA 42.182: "Sed Deus invertit omnia: Cain abiicit, et Habel facit Angelum et primum inter omnes Sanctos."

[105] LW 7.55; WA 44.340-1: "… quod haud dubie Iacob toti domui assiduo et fideliter inculcavit: sed fiunt illi patricidae et fratricidae, werden eytel Teuffel, Solus Ioseph angelus est, solus apprehendit verbum patris, concipit fidem, spem, caritatem, et retinet mordicus, adeo ut nec impetu, nec insidiis Sathanae excuti sibi patiatur."

[106] LW 8.168; WA 44.701: "Sicut hic Iacob totus est Angelus, imo insignis preco divinitatis, qui coram posteris et haeredibus suis veram vim promissionis et benedictionis divinae profert. Respicit enim posteritatem, non secundum carnem, sed praecipue secundum spiritum et fidem …"

[107] Despite the fact that Scripture makes no mention of how Enoch's descendants were notified, nor by whom, Luther has no problems with attributing this report to an angel. We find something similar in his exegesis of Genesis 3:9, where he says, "It is not unreasonable to answer that God [called Adam to judgment] through the ministrations of the angels and that an angel acted in God's stead and, as God's representative, spoke these words to Adam." LW 1.173; WA 42.129. Also, Luther writes that Noah only married due to angelic (or patriarchal) intervention. LW 1.356; WA 42.261. He is clearly comfortable with a certain amount of assumption regarding angels working behind the scenes.

[108] LW 1.345; WA 42.253-4: "Querunt igitur eum, querit filius Methusalah, querunt alii liberi et nepotes. Suspecta eis erat Cainitarum malicia. Itaque fortasse cogitarunt eum sicut Habelem occisum et clam sepultum esse. Donec tandem Deo revelante per Angelum didicerunt ab ipso Deo raptum et in Paradisum esse collocatum."

translated into the "angelic life."[109] The nature of such a life, however, is something that humanity is currently incapable of knowing, given that humans remain flesh and blood creatures. What is necessary to know about Enoch's departure from this life, concludes Luther, is that he was taken away bodily and that he remains alive, in a state that is clearly not a physical one.[110] Thus, Luther connects the Enoch story back to Adam and the Fall:

> But here, too, we are reminded of our sin. If Adam had not sinned, we would not be mortal men; but, like Enoch, we would, without fear and pain, be taken out of this physical life to another, better, and spiritual life. Now that we have lost that life, this story points out to us that we must not despair of having Paradise and life restored to us. The flesh indeed cannot be without pain; but since the conscience has been quieted, death is like a fainting spell through which we pass into rest. That pain of the flesh would have been absent in the innocent nature; for we would have been taken away as if by a sleep, and, awakening shortly, we would have been in heaven and would have lived the angelic life.[111]

IV.1.4. A Conclusion

As we can see, Luther formulated many of his conclusions about the nature of the human-angel relationship in the early stage of his career. Already, we find him discussing the angels' ministry of comfort to humanity, the ways in which angels should serve as examples for us, and the ways in which angels and humanity are so similar that the lines

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[109] LW 1.347; WA 42.255: "Sed postea incredibilis leticia et consolatio eis obiecta est, cum audirent, Filium suum cum ipso Deo vivere, et a Deo translatum ad angelicam vitam."

[110] LW 1.350; WA 42.257: "Qualis autem ea vita sit, quam vivit, nos, qui adhuc caro et sanguis sumus, non possumus scire. Satis autem nobis est, quod scimus eum etiam corpore raptum esse. Id quod Patriarchae sine dubio intellexerunt ex revelatione, quibus morituris hac consolatione opus fuit. Tantum nos quoque scimus. Quid autem faciat, ubi sit et quomodo vivat Henoch, nescimus: vivere eum scimus, sed certe non hac animali vita, est enim apud Deum, sicut textus clare dicit."

[111] LW 1.349; WA 42.256: "Admonemur autem hic quoque peccati nostri. Si enim Adam non peccasset, non essemus nos homines mortui, sed sicut Henoch sine timore et dolore rapti ex hac animali vita ad aliam meliorem et spiritualem vitam. Nunc, cum vitam amiserimus, ostendit nobis haec Historia restitutionem Paradisi et vitae non desperandam esse. Caro quidem dolore carere non potest, Sed cum conscientia pacata est, mors habet similitudinem Syncopis, per quam transimus in requiem. Ille carnis dolor abfuisset in innocenti natura, essemus enim rapti, quasi per somnum, ac mox evigilantes fuissemus in coelo et vixissemus angelicam vitam."

between them can become blurred. While we find that these themes remained present in his later life, we also find that he continued to refine them. As time passes, Luther expands his understanding of the kinds of comfort the angels can offer to include — and prioritize — more spiritual comforts, such as friendship, brotherhood, or even sharing in human suffering. Strangely, his conception of angels as comforters has received no attention in scholarship, outside of Soergel's article.[112]

Likewise, when considering imitation in the years before 1526, Luther seems more concerned with reminding his followers that performing works similar to what the angels do will not bring holiness. Later, his concern is more general, and he urges his listeners to imitate the angels not by performing 'angelic' works, but by living an 'angelic' life. And transformation, though addressed in the early years, had nowhere near the importance in his thought that it did in later years, especially in the final stage of his career. In fact, if we compare how Luther's thoughts on the subject are spread between our chronological groupings, we find that during the years 1536-1545, he had as much to say on the topic then as he did in the previous two periods combined. We find evidence of Luther's eight angelological influences in his discussion – most of them assert (to varying degrees) that a human being can occupy a place in heaven, in some manner, that would otherwise be

[112] On page 71 of his article, Soergel discusses the "Sermon on Preparation for Death," in which Luther describes the angels as being present at the moment of death. However, there, Soergel links Luther's thoughts to his overall understanding of angelic guardianship, rather than as a separate facet of their interaction with humanity, as I have. In contrast, Neil R. Leroux, in his book *Martin Luther as Comforter: Writings on Death*, presents several instances where Luther mentions the angels, yet Leroux never addresses them in any way. For example, he draws on a quotation from the same sermon as does Soergel, in which Luther preaches on receiving the sacraments, particularly extreme unction: "Let no one presume to perform such things by his own power, but humbly ask God to create and preserve such faith in and such understanding of his holy sacraments in him. He must practice awe and humility in all this, lest he ascribe these works to himself instead of allowing God the glory. To this end he must call upon the holy angels, particularly his own angel, the Mother of God, and all the apostles and beloved saints, especially since God has granted him exceptional zeal for this (WA 2.296)." Leroux only comments on the involvement of the saints in this passage, despite footnoting both Schreiner's and Hendrix's articles (both op. cit.) — yet not Soergel's.

reserved for an angel. Likewise, they agree that humanity was very similar to the angels before the Fall. But certain authors seem to have had more of an impact on Luther on this topic than others. In particular, Chrysostom's emphasis on living an angelic life in general rather than carrying out specific actions finds a parallel with Luther's concerns. Bonaventure, too, is unique in the way that he specifically spoke of the angels as comforters of humanity; this idea was significant to Luther as well.

With that, we now begin our analysis of Luther's thoughts regarding the relationship between the angels and the church.

IV.2. The Angels' Relationship with the Church

The angel's relationship with humanity is not the only notable relationship within Luther's angelology. Consistently throughout his career, Luther believed and taught that the angels were involved in the Church. And yet — even this assertion requires some definition. The Church — without delving into more complex definitional issues that are outside the scope of this dissertation — is generally, broadly understood as a primarily human institution, one that connects humanity to God and Jesus Christ. As we have seen, however, the tradition prior to Luther saw the angels' connection to the Church as something deeper than mere involvement. For those theologians, the angels were as much a part of the Church as was humanity.

The same can be said for Luther. Yes, perhaps, during strictly ecclesiological discussions, his focus was on the human dimension and experience of the Church. Comments from several scholars on the contribute to such a perspective. For example, Lohse:

> "What persists in all of this and at the same time brackets Luther's variously accented ecclesiological statements is the unconditional preeminence of the Word and the definition of the church as the fellowship of those who hear it. Statements such as that the church is the number or assembly of believers appear continually in Luther with certain variations. Materially, this means that the doctrine of justification is also at the basis of Luther's ecclesiology."[113]

Althaus makes a similar statement, emphasizing the presence of the Gospel, and further points out that Luther never distinguishes between a 'visible' and an 'invisible' church. Instead, for him, such terms describe a single church, existing in two ways.[114] Bayer concurs, himself placing emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit as that which makes a Christian a Christian, and a gathering of Christians a church. "For this reason, where the Word of God is, there the church is.[115] And while Cranz agrees (for the most part) with the above, he actually places priority on Luther's position of a dichotomy between the 'visible' and 'invisible' churches, and, like Lohse, links Luther's ecclesiology with his theory of justification. Thus, "Luther's early theology of the church is thus strictly comparable to his theology of justice, and it does not make use of the later distinction between two simultaneous realms of Christian existence."[116]

All of these definitions and presentations of Luther's thought are correct — and yet, they are also sadly lacking. They all agree on the major defining factor of the church for Luther: the presence of the Word. What these historians and theologians fail to acknowledge is that none of what Luther says about the church should be understood as

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[113] Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 278.
[114] Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*. Trans. by Robert C. Schultz. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 288-9, 293.
[115] Bayer, *Luther's Theology*, 257.
[116] Cranz, *Luther's Thought*, 118-21. See also John Tonkin, *The Church and the Secular Order in Reformation Thought* (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1971), 61, as well as pg. 67: "To describe the Church as a communion of saints, therefore, is to see it as a solidarity of persons bound together by faith in Christ and led by the Spirit toward the eschatological fulfillment." Also, Janz, *Handbook*, 23-8.

excluding the angels. All of his definitions allow for their presence and participation therein, and as we will see, for Luther, the Church would not be the Church without the involvement of the angels; this is especially true in the later stages of his career. According to Luther, the angels participate in worship services alongside humanity, even in the practicing of the Sacraments. Furthermore, the angels and Christians share membership as equals within the Church and within the heavenly kingdom of God.

IV.2.1. Pre-1526

As alluded to earlier, at this stage of his career, Luther was not that concerned with how the angels relate to the Church. Nevertheless, we do find some comments in his writings that deal with this topic, and perhaps more importantly, establish positions that Luther held throughout the rest of his career.

IV.2.1.1. Participation and Celebration

One of the main aspects of the angels' participation within the church that Luther points to is how the angels support the prayers of believers. In one of his sermons, he teaches that the angels are responsible for caring for these prayers, which please God even more so than those of earthly children please their earthly fathers.[117] The angels also pray alongside Christ on our behalf, according to another of his sermons.[118] And as we have seen, Luther ties the angels' preaching to human preaching on many occasions. He again links angels and Christians together in this period — particularly those who serve as bishops. He writes in his Gloss on Psalm 150 that the bishops of the church preach as

[117] "Dominica Vocem Iocunditatis Ioh. XVI." WA 15.550: "Omnes angeli respiciunt tuam precationem, pater celestis plus delectatur ea quam si pater carnalis audiat carnalem filium."
[118] "Dominica Ante Decollationis Iohannis." WA 17.I.406: "Hic conclusum, quod sumus in peccatis tam magnis, ut omnes angeli non possint nos."

angels — and should in addition likewise serve as an army of God.[119] While preaching on Easter Monday, on Luke 24, Luther makes the assertion that whenever Christians speak about God, the angels are present among them; [120] this theme is one that he will return to many times over the course of his career.

Luther also makes note of how the angels fit into the Christian's experience of the Sacraments. In one sermon, he preaches that when the priest gives the Eucharist to the parishioners, it is both a sign and a promise of communion with the angels and the saints.[121] Likewise, when a Christian is baptized, he or she enters into communion, not only with Christ, but with the angels as well.[122]

IV.2.1.2. Collaboration

Obviously, we have seen that Luther saw a deep connection between angels and humanity. But Luther also explicitly links that connection, on occasion, to a person's status as a Christian — especially when considering the transformative aspect of the angel-human relationship. For example, in his scholia on Psalm 97, Luther interprets the angels mentioned in verse 7 as being both those in heaven and those within the church.[123]

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[119] "GLOSSA: PSALMUS CXLIX." WA 4.461: "… exercitibus, potentatibus, qui sunt episcopatus in Ecclesia: ipsi enim non solum predicare ut angeli, sed et facere ut virtutes debent …"

[120] "Predigt am Ostersonntag Nachmittag." WA 15.523: "… quando loquimur de deo, angelos habemus inter nos …"

[121] "Eyn Sermon von der bereytung zum sterben." WA 2.694: "Hat mir der priester geben den heyligen leychnam Christi, das eyn zeychen und zusagen ist der gemeynschafft aller Engel und heyligen …"

[122] "PSALMVS QVINTVS DECIMVS, HEBRAEIS SEXTVS DECIMVS. MICHTHAM DAVID." WA 6.452: "Er befelht seynen Engeln, allen heyligenn, allen creaturen, das sie mit yhm auff dich sehen, deyner seel warnemen und sie entpfahen."

[123] "GLOSSA: PSALMUS XCVI." WA 4.114: "… *omnes angeli* celestes et ecclesiastici …" From the Vulgate: "Confundantur omnes qui adorant sculptilia, et qui gloriantur in simulacris suis. Adorate eum omnes angeli ejus." http://www.drbo.org/lvb/chapter/21096.htm; accessed April 8th, 2013. Cf. NRSV: "All worshippers of images are put to shame, those who make their boast in worthless idols; all gods bow down before him."

In addition, while writing on Psalm 82:7[124] in 1513, Luther emphasizes to his reader that the life of the Christian is not the life that the rest of humanity leads. Instead, the Christian life is a heavenly, angelic life.[125] This shared life comes about because the saving grace and mercy of God raises the Christian up into the heavenly community of angels, above the foundation of the earth.[126] Only through this raising up can humanity truly access God, according to him. In his gloss on Psalm 18, Luther discussed the incomprehensibility of God. God remains within inaccessible light, and humanity remains unable to perceive God except through imperfect understanding and by means of negations. Even so, Luther does assert that God, in God's tabernacle, is surrounded by both the Church Triumphant and the choirs of the angels, together.[127] In any case, Luther believed during this period that the Church was an entity in which angels and humans not only participated together, but also shared in a fundamental way.

Sadly, our example text from this period — the *Lectures on Hebrews* — contains nothing that I would categorize as speaking to this question.

IV.2.2. 1526-1535

In this period, Luther teaches that the main point of contact between angels and the church is based on the worshippers' belief itself; without belief, the believer will not experience the angels' presence in the fullest way possible. Thus, Luther works to

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[124] Psalm 82: 6-7: "I say, 'You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, and fall like any prince.'" (NRSV)

[125] "SCHOLAE: PSALMUS LXXXI." WA 3.623: "Quia vita Christiani non est vita humana, sed angelica et celestis."

[126] "Psalmus XXX." WA 55.I.1.286: "Benedictus Benedicendus dominus: quoniam mirificauit mirabiliter fecit, dum spiritum saluat carnem damnando misericordiam gratiam suam mihi in ciuitate munita Ecclesia 'supra petram fundata' et angelis circundata."

[127] "Psalmus XVII." WA 55.I.1.138: "Et posuit tenebras latibulum suum i. e. factus est incomprehensibilis ita quod attingi non potest, 'habitans lucem inaccessibilem', vel in fide latet et videtur per tenebras intellectus per negationes. in circuitu eius quia ipse in medio eorum tabernaculum eius Ecclesia triumphans vna cum angelorum choris …"

reinforce that belief by encouraging his audience to remember that whoever trusts and clings to God will be encircled by the angels.[128] He also acknowledges that the life of believer can be difficult to follow. In a third sermon given on the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, Luther preaches that sometimes, the Church must place a member under a ban, or refuse him or her access to the sacraments. But the Church must also know that this punishment is from God, not humanity. However, he continues, preaching that it is far better for a lost Christian to repent and return to the fold because the Church, along with the angels, will rejoice and receive the lost person.[129]

IV.2.2.1. Participation and Celebration

This claim, of angels rejoicing at and with believers, is not an isolated case. Luther consistently makes a clear case that the angels participate in the celebration of the church. One who believes is never without the angels, Luther preaches — in fact, he or she will join them at the heavenly wedding, dancing and leaping together.[130] Likewise, reception of the Word by the faithful brings joy not only to God, but to the angels as well.[131] Luther also takes the time, in this phase of his career, to remind his listeners that all preachers preach the same Word — Paul, he himself, they themselves should they preach. Even the angels preach this exact same word; God's pure Word is necessary for true preaching to

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[128] "5. Predigt über den 110. Psalm." WA 41.186: "Qui heret in deo, certus est, quod angeli in circuitu eius sunt."

[129] Church Postils 4.196; "Eine predigt vom Zorn, auff das Euangelium Matth. v." WA 41.748: "Also mus die Christliche kirche auch thun, wo sie einen jnn bann thut und dem Teuffel gibt (wie S. Paulus den zu Corintho j. Cor. v.) und sagt jm abe die Sacrament und alle gemeinschafft, auff das sie seiner sunde nicht teilhafftig werde, Das ist ja ein schrecklich urteil und grewlicher zorn und doch nicht eins menschen, sondern Gottes zorn, Denn sie wolt viel lieber, das sich der mensch bekerte und jm geholffen wuerde, Wie sie auch thut, wo er sich bekert, da nimpt sie jn auff als jren lieben son und frewet sich uber jm sampt allen Engeln, wie Christus von dem verloren schaf und verdorben son sagt Luc. xv."

[130] "Predigt am Weihnachtstage." WA 37.625: "qui credit, non est sine angelis … Qui credit, **der ist zur hochzeit, ibi tantzen und springen Engel mit.**"

[131] "Vorlesung über das Hohelied 1530 –1531." WA 31.II.691: "Est gaudium angelis et ipsi deo, quando populus reverenter suscipit verbum et manet in eo."

occur.[132] This latter point is his emphasis here: the Word, correctly and faithfully transmitted, is the criteria of true preaching, no matter who spoke. He defines one of the main events that takes place during a worship service – preaching – as something both angels and humanity do. Later, he preaches that the angels come to the Church and deliver their message, singing and praising with humanity. More important for our purposes, Luther continues by stating that they also receive the same God as we do.[133]

However, the content of true preaching is not always decipherable. What is preached to the Church contains such mysteries that not even the angels are capable of understanding them, Luther tells his audience, pointing to I Peter 1:12.[134] Ultimately, presence of the angels alongside the faithful is the truth that he hopes his listeners will grasp. In a sermon on Luke 15, Luther again reminds his listeners that whenever Christ is present, the angels are as well. And so, whenever Christians gather as Christians, Christ is present — which means the angels are as well, guarding and protecting them.[135] Expanding on this point, Luther emphasizes the common community that Christians share with the angels. The angels are constantly near to us, playing. But Christ, who is in community with them Himself, draws them to us as well. Even so, Christ shares more with us than they do — such as flesh and blood — and comes to us in the same way that He came to Mary Magdalene in John 20; not for His sake, but for ours.[136] Thus, the

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[132] "Die Ein undt Zwantzigste Predigtt." WA 33.304: "Das ist ein nötig stuck, das wir wissen, S. Paulus, ich undt alle prediger, so euch predigen, auch die Engel darzu, sollen gottes wortt rein fur sich haben, wen sie predigen wollen."

[133] "Predigt am Weihnachtstage, nachmittags." WA 41.485: "Ideo angeli veniunt ad nos et annunciant **froelich** nuncium &c.. et nobiscum convenire et esse **her unden**, cum eundem dominum acquirimus."

[134] "It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look!" (NRSV)

[135] "Predigt am 3. Sonntag nach Trinitatis." WA 20.443: "Ubi Christus est, ibi et angeli. Ergo ubi Christianus, ibi Christus, qui docet eum et angeli custodiunt …"

[136] "Predigt am Ostertag." WA 41.53: "Et his non solum adsunt **die lieben, heiligen Enge**l, qui **sicher** cum **uns spielen,** Sed Christus, qui se **gmein,** imo **gemeiner** quam angeli facit **und gehort uns neher zw,** quia

angels are members of the same community that Christ and His believers share, a community that has existed since the beginning. Preaching on Matthew 7, Luther reminds his audience that having God's Word means not only that Christ is present with them, but that all the angels (and saints) are as well, since the beginning of creation.[137]

IV.2.2.2. Collaboration

As we have seen, Luther believed that true Christians live a life that stretches across two realms — heaven and earth. But in this period, we begin to see evidence that he also believed that it is in the Church, specifically, that that the two realms come together. Preaching on John 17:24,[138] Luther teaches that the place that Christ speaks of is the enfolding within the arms of the Fathers. The angels elevate believers and carry them to this heavenly place. Even so, this fact cannot be demonstrated, but must be grasped through belief in the Word.[139] However, Luther is again taking the idea of 'place' to mean something more than mere earthly location — to him, Christ's words do not refer to where He stands on earth alone, but to an existence that brings together heaven and earth: dwelling in the bosom of the Fathers while still living an earthly life.

In a manuscript dealing with the Lord's Supper, Luther again addresses the idea of distance or separation between the heavenly and earthly realms. Pointing back towards

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angeli non carnem et sanguinem, et tamen cum Magdalena **gespilt** i. e. cum omnibus nobis, quod Christus non propter se, sed Magdalenae causa venerit."

[137] "Das fünffte, Sechste und Siebend Capitel S. Matthei gepredigt und ausgelegt. 1532." WA 32.500: "denn weil ich Gottes wort habe, so habe ich Christum bey mir sampt allen lieben Engeln und allen heiligen von anfang der wellt." On the church as an order of creation, see Bayer, *Luther's Theology*, 126.

[138] "Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world." (NRSV)

[139] "Sabbato quo eodem anno superiori Hanna mea obdor: in domino." WA 28.193: "Wo ich bin (spricht er), das ist jnn des Vaters schos und armen, da alle Engel muessen zulauffen und uns heben und tragen, on das es keinen namen hat und lesst sich nicht mit fingern zeigen noch abmalen, sondern jm wort durch den glauben mus gefasset werden."

John 3:13,[140] he remarks that Christ Himself said that He came from heaven to earth, the implication being that the Incarnation bridged that gap. Thus, the kingdom of God may be a heavenly kingdom, but it still exists on earth. The angels are of heaven and are on earth; likewise, Christians are subjects of the kingdom of God and yet remain on earth. Even God's Word is spoken on earth. Luther's final point is that Christ, as ruler of earth, was not only born here, but will eventually govern an earthly kingdom, directing it with justice. He is clearly making the case that the kingdom of God comprises both humanity and the angels, and exists both in heaven and on earth.[141] Eventually, the separation between heaven and earth will be bridged, permanently. When God brings about the new creation, having destroyed the world through fire, the angels will come when Christ comes. All will then walk with the angels and the saints, not on earth, but in heaven.[142]

But the clearest example from this period that illustrates Luther's conviction that the Church exists as a bridge between heaven and earth, uniting them into a single Kingdom of God comes from a sermon given in 1534. There, Luther emphasizes traditional wedding imagery when describing the kingdom of heaven. Heaven is filled with eternal joy and blessings, he says, and because of this, the proclamation of the gospel is even more joyous: while the words are glorious, the reality described is even more. The angels unceasingly desire this reality, and join in the celebration in heaven.

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[140] "No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man." (NRSV)

[141] "Vom Abendmahl Christi Bekenntnis." WA 26.422: "… wie Christus von sich sagt 'Des menschen son, der ym hymel ist'. Was darffs viel redens? Jst doch das hymelreich auff erden, Die engel sind zu gleich ym hymel und auff erden, Die Christen sind zu gleich ym reich Gottes und auff erden, So man auff erden wil verstehen, wie sie davon reden, Mathematice vel localiter, Gotts wort ist ia auff erden, so ward der geist auff erden geben, Vnd Christus der koenig war auff erden und sol ein reich auff erden haben, so weit die welt ist, Psal. 2. und richt und gerechtickeit auff erden schaffen, Jere. 31."

[142] "Dominica .2. Adventus." WA 32.231: "Tum veniet Christus cum angelis Thes: et impii qui Christum persequuti, &c.. Haec dicit Euangelista **'mit grosser herlickeit', alle lufft vol Engel** et Sanctorum, in aere, non in terra."

Luther describes them as wandering the feast, eating and drinking the heavenly food at the heavenly table with the blessed, as well as waiting upon them as servants (as Paul describes them in Hebrews 1:14). Likewise, they are already always around Christians, rejoicing at our happiness and our joy at being able to share in this feast. At this point in the sermon, Luther is not making a distinction between the celebration in Heaven and the experience of Christians on earth — to him, they are the same: the wedding celebration begins here, in time, and continues into eternity.[143] He goes on to remark that even though humanity remains incapable of seeing them, we do have God's Word that they rejoice with us. But we also learn from the Word that the angels protect us as well, such as in II Kings 6[:18], where Elijah's prayer curses his enemies with blindness.[144] Thus, the Christian should not be afraid of attending the wedding feast, nor should one worry about how God and the angels will protect him or her.[145]

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[143] House Postils 3.110; "Predigt am 20. Sonntag nach Trinitatis (im Hause)." WA 37.552: "**Das sind predigt und speis und der pracht auff dieser hochzeit.** Angeli **horen gern davon reden. Sie durffen es nicht** et tamen **sind sie so begirig, haben ein freud und wolgefallen daran und lust zusehen unser gluck, das Christus unser breutgam ist.** Si nos ingrati, fiet, ut succendatur Civitas &c.. vocat ergo suum regnum regnum caelorum et nupcias, in quibus eternum est gaudium **und fulle aller ding,** Ideo est ein solche herrlich predigt, **da es bey den worten nicht bleibt,** sed res sequitur, Et angeli libenter audiunt, **gehen jnn der hochzeit umb her, schawen, wie frolich wir sind, wie wir essen und trincken, dienen uns zu tissch,** sicut Paulus dicit Eb. 2. in fine. **Die sind umb uns, sehens gern, das wir die predigt gerne horn, Das ist ir lust und freude, wenn sie sehen, das man frolich ist &c.. So malet er** regnum suum et vocat praedicationem Euangelii nuptias, **Ein freudentag, der hie anhebt und dort wheret ewig.**"

[144] Note that Luther is interpolating the angels' involvment; the NRSV does not mention them in this passage. "When the Arameans came down against him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Strike this people, please, with blindness.' So he struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked."

[145] House Postils 3.115; "Predigt am 20. Sonntag nach Trinitatis (im Hause)." WA 37.553-4: "**Wir sollen auch eusserlich frolich und from sein, so lachet unser herr Gott, die engel pfeiffen &c..** Hoc quanquam oculis non videmus, tamen verbum dicit, quod 'super uno peccatore' **&c..** 'sit gaudium' **&c..** 'quam super 99 iustis' **&c..** Si igitur angeli laetantur, **so sind wir verflucht, das wir diese freude nicht annemen, Ob wirs nicht sehen, so horen wirs doch** in verbo, In Regum de Heliseo et hostibus. **Das ist gewis, also sind sie umb uns,** si non videmus, tamen credimus, et ipse dixit in sacra scriptura et exemplis comprobavit. Ergo tantum veniamus ad nuptias et non simus ingrati sicut Iudaei."

IV.2.2.3. *Lectures on Zechariah*

In the two sets of the *Lectures on Zechariah*, Luther's focus is not pointed towards the relationship between the angels and the church. Nonetheless, in both 1526 and 1527, he makes some intriguing statements on the subject.

In the earlier set of lectures, we find an interesting rumination during his exploration of 12:8:[146]

> *Like the angel of the Lord before them:* He adds this to describe the shape or dimension of the church, to tell how this kingdom of Christ is established in us while we yet live, lest anyone imagine it a visible and physical kingdom. [The Christian] is, He says, like an angel or messenger, as if to say, "One still has an angelic home," that is, everything merely lies hidden in the Word. It is still a kingdom of faith. All things are still in shadow, as Paul says, until the day comes when all things will be revealed to us face to face (cf. I Corinthians 13:12). Therefore with this statement He summons us to the church which is still doing battle.[147]

Here Luther is emphasizing the nature of the church as an invisible, explicitly angelic entity active in the world. Likewise, as a member of this church, the Christian dwells within it just as the angels do. We also again see his theme of this angelic existence crossing the barrier between heaven and earth, becoming more complete after death.

In 1527, the same verse serves as an opportunity for Luther to comment yet again on the subject. This time, however, he goes a bit further. From his comments on 12:8:

> Again, they who are strong and "the house of David shall be like the house of God, like the angel of the Lord among them." That is: They who are

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[146] "On that day the Lord will shield the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord, at their head." (NRSV)

[147] LW 20.138; WA 13.659: "Sicut angelus domini coram eis: Hoc additur, ut describatur forma seu modus ecclesiae, quomodo sit constitutum hoc regnum Christi in nobis adhuc vivis, ne quis visibile et corporale regnum sibi somniet. Est, inquit, vice angeli i. e. nuntii, q. d. habet adhuc angelicam domum, hoc est, adhuc omnia tantum in verbo latent, est adhuc regnum fidei, sunt omnia in aenigmate, ut inquit Paulus, donec veniat dies, quo revelentur omnia de facie ad faciem. Itaque revocat nos hoc verbo ad ecclesiam militantem adhuc, omnia namque adhuc sunt tecta, creduntur tantum, coram deo autem sunt conspicua et semper exhibita, quam revelationem expectamus nos quoque."

> strong victors like David, who conquer and are victorious in their weakness, will be the true house of God among the Christians and the angels of the Lord; that is, in them God will live, and they will be able to teach others and to proclaim the Word of God rightly. And that is as much as saying that they will truly be the most prominent Christians and like the angels and messengers of Christ, who proclaim His Word.[148]

So the Church has the potential to do what the angels do – preach the Word, live rightly, and teach others – and thereby actually become what the angels are. This goes beyond seeing angels as merely assisting the Church in its tasks, or supporting the secular order. Here Luther is holding them up as an example, something to be viewed as the end result of true commitment to the Word and work of God. He is setting up an equality between the angels and humanity within the Church.

IV.2.3. 1536-1545

In the final period of his life, Luther displays another nuance in his discussions of the angels and their relationship to the church. We find more and more often that he ties the presence of the angels to their joy at Christians' discussions of Christ and the enacting of worship — not just in the formalized parish setting, but at all times when Christ is being praised.

IV.2.3.1. Participation and Celebration

According to Luther, hearing and studying the Word of the Gospel brings joy to both God and to Christ, as well as performing a service for Them. But he also goes on to say that when the Christian performs this service, Christ is present with him or her —

[148] LW 20.327; WA 23.647: "Widderumb die, so stark sind und 'Davids haus, sollen wie Gotts haus sein und wie de HERRN Engel unter yhnen'. Das ist: welche nu solche starcke siegmenner sind wie David, die ynn solcher schwacheit obligen und siegen, Die werden bey den Christen das rechte Gottes haus sein und wie Engel des HERRN, das ist ynn welchen Gott wonet und sie als denn die andere recht leren und Gotts wort verkuendigen konnen, das ist so viel: Sie werden die rechten furnemesten Christen und gleich Christus Engel und boten sein, die sein wort verkuendigen."

and, more importantly, the angels also come near and take pleasure in what we do.[149] The angels do not envy humanity in any way, Luther tells his audience. Instead, they join together with humanity in song and praise of God.[150]

Nevertheless, the presence of the angels is not guaranteed; they can be driven away. In an Easter Monday sermon, Luther shares a story that he has heard, about an old man who often received special visions from God. When this man was among young people, he would listen to their conversations and see something remarkable: whenever these young people would discuss Scripture or other godly subjects, beautiful men would come to join them, smiling all the while. But when the conversation turned "silly," these same men would become displeased and leave, sadly, only to be replaced by dirty, black hogs.[151] Obviously, the angels are pleased by the Christians' discussion, while only demons are pleased by the 'silly' talk.

Luther also returns to his recurrent theme of the angels as preachers, and again draws an equality between all true preachers of the Word, regardless of the nature of their beings. Using Paul and Peter as his human examples, on St. Stephen's Day in 1538,

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[149] Church Postils 2.291; "Euangelium des Sontags nach Ostern. Johan. XX." WA 21.229: "Und ob kein ander nutz dabey were, solte uns doch das reitzen, gerne damit umb zu gehen, das wir Gott und dem HErrn Christo daran zu gefallen und einen lieben Gottes dienst thun, Und wissen, das er als denn gewislich nicht weit von uns ist, wie er selbs verheisset und spricht Matth. xviij.: 'Wo jr drey oder zween beynander sind in meinem Namen, da bin ich mitten unter jnen', So sind mit jm freilich auch die lieben Engel umb dich und haben jr lust und freud darob, Und dagegen der Teuffel hin weg getrieben wird und weichen mus, wie er von Christo weichen must, da er jm mit Gottes wort widerstund."

[150] "Enarratio capitis noni Esaiae." WA 40.III.597: "Angeli etiam non saturantur, multo minus invident, sed nobiscum canunt et laetantur."

[151] Church Postils 2.91-2; "Euangelium Am Oster Montage. Luc. xxiiij." WA 21.229: "Des lieset man auch ein Exempel eines alten Vaters in der Wuesten, der von Gott sondere gesicht und offenbarung hatte, wenn er unter dem jungen hauffen war, was sie fur rede mit einander hielten, Und sahe, wenn sie von der Schrifft und goettlichen sachen redeten, das sich schoene Juengling zu jnen geselleten und freundlich und froelich zulechelten, Widerumb aber, wenn sie leichtfertig und unnutz geschwetz trieben, das die selbigen unmuts und betruebt sich von jnen kereten, Und unfletige schwartze Sew kamen und sich waltzeten unter jnen etc."

Luther himself pointed to the angels of Psalm 97:7,[152] preaching that anyone who preaches the true Word of God is God's *botschafften*, God's 'mouth-bringer.' In fact, we see the angels preaching a sermon in praise of the infant Christ in Luke 2:14.[153] Thus, the Word is what matters in preaching, not the particularity of who brings it: all those who bring the true Word of God are equal, in this respect at least.[154] And so long as a pastor or bishop preaches the true Gospel, angels will guard him or her.[155] Regarding the angels' participation in the sacraments of the church, Luther says little. He does teach, however, that Baptism is so important to God that not only is God Godself present during this sacrament, but the angels are as well.[156]

IV.2.3.2. Collaboration

In keeping with his teaching from prior years, in his 1544 sermon on the angels, Luther tells his audience that in Heaven, humanity will sit and live amongst the angels, seeing all three members of the Trinity, just as the angels do.[157] But in this period, he takes the further step of explicitly linking the heavenly realm and the earthly realm by means of Christian and angelic lives. Preaching on I John 5 on the Sunday after Easter,

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[152] From the Vulgate: "Confundantur omnes qui adorant sculptilia, et qui gloriantur in simulacris suis. Adorate eum omnes angeli ejus." http://www.drbo.org/lvb/chapter/21096.htm; accessed April 8th, 2013. Cf. NRSV: "All worshippers of images are put to shame, those who make their boast in worthless idols; all gods bow down before him."

[153] Luke 2:13-14: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'" (NRSV)

[154] "Predigt am Tage Stephani, nachmittags." WA 46.525: "Non ergo solus Petrus, Paulus, sed etiam Angeli concionantur, **So viel herrn predigen, die alle Ja zu der predigt sagen unnd sindt alle botschafften gottes.** 'Adorabunt eum omnes Angeli', dicitur in psalmo. **Das ist erfullet heut,** Adorant omnes Angeli, quotquot sunt, istum infantem, probant enim sua concione et Cantilena. Non ergo nos sumus inventores huius doctrinae, **es ist nicht von geringen leutten gegangen diese predigt.**"

[155] "Predigt am Sonntag Jnvokavit." WA 46.206: "Item quando praedicatores et Episcopi: Si praedico Euangelium recte, ibi angelos habeo custodes."

[156] "Predigt am Epiphaniastage, nachmittags." WA 49.668: "**Das werck kan man nicht gnugsam preisen,** quod Deus per baptismum tanta facit, quia Deus adest et omnes Angeli."

[157] "Predigt am Michaelistage." WA 49.573: "… et credimus, nempe quod **droben sitzen und wonen** inter Angelos et videbimus patrem, Filium et Spiritum sanctum."

Luther draws a distinction between two worlds that he sees John pointing towards: the devil's world and God's world. The devil's world is comprised by earthly life and worldly interests, and is inhabited by those who oppose Christ — not only fallen angels and spirits, but the Turks, Jews, and false Christians. Luther's description of God's realm is what is important for us here, however. God's realm is comprised of two groups of beings: first, the angels, who serve as the primary rulers and counselors, and second, the Christian church on earth. For Luther, there is no division between angel and human in the kingdom of God, despite the reality that humanity continues to live a physical life on earth.[158] And it is this teaching that he further explores in his *Lectures on Genesis.*

IV.2.3.3. *Lectures on Genesis*

Luther's conception of the church as an equal partnership between angels and human beings sees much more definition throughout his *Lectures on Genesis*. While he does refer to the angels as "the heavenly church,"[159] during his comments on Genesis 11, the rest of his comments on the nature of the church reveal that he in no way saw the fact

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[158] Church Postils 7.234-5; "Am Sontag nach Ostern. Epistel I. Johan. V." WA 21.278-9: "Wiltu nu wissen, was dis fur ein Sieg und uberwindung ist und wie es zugehe, So mustu erstlich wissen, was er die Welt heisset, Denn er redet hie nicht von Stedten und Landen, Acker, Haus und Hoff, Gelt und Gut, Sondern er teilet und unterscheidet die zwey reich, Das eine, das da heisset Gottes und Christi, welches ist das Himelreich. In welchem sind erstlich die furnemesten, innersten Rete und nehesten Herrn, die Engel im Himel. Darnach die gantze Christenheit auff Erden, unter einem Heubt, Herrn und Koenig, Christo. Die ander Herrschafft ist das hellisch Reich, da der Teuffel Herr und Fuerst ist, sampt seinen gewaltigen Reten und dienern, den Engeln, die mit jm von Gott abgefallen sind, und der Welt, welches sind die Leute auff erden, die wider Christum leren, gleuben und leben, Heiden und Jueden, Tuercken und falsche Christen.

Denn wenn man vom himlischen Reich Gottes sagt, mus man nicht allein verstehen das Regiment und die Leute, so gen Himel gehoeren, Sondern den Herrn und Regenten selbs, Christum, mit allen seinen Engeln und Heiligen, beide, lebendigen und todten. Also auch heisst die Welt oder das Reich der Welt nicht allein das jrdisch wesen und leben, sondern furnemlich jren Herrn und Fuersten, den Teuffel mit seinen Engeln und allen unchristen, Gottlosen und boesen Leuten auff Erden. Darumb so S. Johannes hie spricht: 'Wer aus Gott geborn ist, uberwindet er die Welt', wil er durch das wort Welt zu furderst verstanden haben den Teuffels selbs mit alle seiner gewalt und gantzem regiment auff Erden."

[159] LW 2.213; WA 42.412: "Verum igitur verbum est, quod omnis Apostata est persecutor sui ordinis. Nam quia Ham cum sua posteritate ab Ecclesia discessit, hoc egit postea, ut Ecclesiam premeret et se ac suos eveheret. Sic Satan postquam discessit a Deo et angelis seu coelesti Ecclesia, Deum et Ecclesiam immani odio prosequitur."

that the angels dwell primarily in heaven and humanity primarily on earth as a true division within the single church. Instead, Luther believed that humanity and the angels together comprise one church — that the 'heavenly church' and the 'earthly church' are one and the same. However, in order to unpack his understanding, we must first consider how Luther defines the church in his Lectures on Genesis.

In his exegesis of Genesis 22:11,[160] he advised his audience to remain in their stations in life (not surprising) and maintain faith in and obedience to God. If the church does so, they will become the "partners" of the angels, companions with them in the kingdom of God.[161] Furthermore, Luther draws no distinction between the existence of God's people on earth and God's people in heaven — they are the same people. In his comments on Genesis 49:33,[162] he writes that here on earth, God's people are gathered together through the sacraments and through the Gospel. And when the godly die, they are transported by the angels to "the bosom of Abraham, or to our people," in keeping with Christ's promise to the patriarch. Similarly, Luther points out that when the fathers speak of the resurrection and future life, they are referring to not only physical existence but also to "the other, spiritual and eternal life," where all natural, biological needs of the body will end.[163] So not only does the Gospel, or the Word, bring believers together into

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[160] "But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'" (NRSV)

[161] LW 4.124; WA 43.225: "Postea quisque suo loco et ordine in eadem fide maneat, et obediat Deo. Ita erimus socii Angelorum, hospites et convivae regni Dei."

[162] "When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people." (NRSV)

[163] LW 8.315-6; WA 44.811-2: "Sicut autem in Ecclesia dicimur colligi ad populum nostrum per Baptismum, per Euangelium et sacramenta, et scimus nos esse in populo nostro, ita morientes in promissione Christi facta Abrahae transferimur per Angelos in sinum Abrahae, sive ad populum nostrum. Ac saepe diximus promissiones patrum pertinere ad resurrectionem et futuram vitam, non tantum ad corporalem, sed ad alteram etiam spiritualem et aeternam, ubi cessabunt animalis vitae opera, nutritionis, generationis et similia. Ubi vero sit populus iste, nescimus."

one body that exists both in the physical world and in the future, spiritual world, but it also brings that body into partnership with the angels.

But the means of access to this future, eternal, spiritual life also concerned Luther. In order to attain it, Luther writes, humanity must have both the knowledge of God and the Word. The uniqueness of God's conversation with humanity shows that there is more to humanity's existence than the physical — there must be a further life after this one.[164] One could also see Satan's presence and works of falsehood as evidence, given that Satan works to obscure God's Word wherever it is present. But the devil's motivation, says Luther, is grief at knowing that through the Word, believers "become citizens of heaven."[165] Thus, the Word also provides access to heavenly citizenship for those who enter into the future life.

Yet, as wonderful and impressive as these accomplishments are, Luther believes that the Word does still more. In fact, the Word creates access to heaven in the midst of physical — and present — reality. We will be focusing on his exegesis of Genesis 28:17[166] in order to explore this idea further. As a starting point, Luther writes that the human faculties have been blinded to the point that they can no longer see the glory of the Word as it is preached in the church building, a glory that transfers to that place itself. However, should one look at that place from a spiritual perspective and really see whose

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[164] LW 1.80-1; WA 42.61: "Hoc significat Sabbatum seu quies Dei, in quo Deus nobiscum loquitur per verbum suum et nos vicissim cum eo per invocationem et fidem. Bestiae quidem audire et intelligere quoque vocem hominis discunt, sicut canes; equi, oves, boves, et conservantur quoque ab homine ac aluntur. Sed nostra melior conditio est, qui Deum audimus et scimus voluntatem eius ac vocamur in certam spem immortalitatis. Sicut testantur manifestae promissiones de vita aeterna, quas Deus nobis post illas obscuras significationes, qualis haec de requie Dei et sanctificatione sabbati est, per verbum suum revelavit. Quanquam haec de sabbato satis clara sunt. Finge enim nullam esse vitam post hanc vitam, An non sequitur nos non opus habere Deo, non verbo eius? Nam hoc, quod in hac vita requirimus aut agimus, etiam sine verbo habere possumus."

[165] LW 1.82; WA 42.62: "… ubi verbum Dei est, ibi ipse quoque nititur mendacium serere et haereses dolet enim ei, nos per verbum, sicut Adamum in Paradiso, fieri cives coelorum."

[166] "And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'" (NRSV)

Word is present, one will "understand that it is the house of God and the gate of heaven."[167] Jacob and the angels have already brought about this portal, says Luther, and thus God's people should thank Him for His revelation in the church. Though it is a specific place, nevertheless, what is important is that the church is in a building where God speaks to followers, feeds them, and cares for them. That truth brings joy to the heavenly angels, says Luther, who are delighted when the church knows and realizes it. He goes on to say that the house of God and the gate of heaven are as one, in the same way that God dwells together with and in His church.[168] Thus, the 'church' is more than just the physical building, according to Luther. He calls it, "… the place or the people where God dwells for the purpose of bringing us into the kingdom of heaven, for it is the gate of heaven."[169] For our purposes, Luther's emphasis on the church as the place where heaven breaks into creation is of central importance. In the church — the "habitation of God on earth" — the Word is taught and the sacraments administered so that humanity

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[167] LW 5.248; WA 43.599-600: "… sed si aspexeris oculis spiritualibus illam additionem Nimirum cuius verbum illud sit, quod ibi dicitur et auditur: Non hominis quidem (si enim hominis verbum est, tum Diabolus loquitur), sed Dei, ibi intelliges esse domum Dei et portam coeli."

[168] LW 5.249; WA 43.600: "Agnoscamus igitur et magnifaciamus Dei immensam gloriam, qua se nobis patefacit in sua Ecclesia. Non enim talis domus est, in qua creat, sicut initio ex nihilo condidit omnia: sed in qua nobiscum loquitur, nobiscum agit, pascit, curat dormientes et vigilantes. Quotusquisque autem est, qui hoc credat? Res vera est et verbum maximum, quo Angeli in coelis delectantur, et audientes implentur gaudio et laetitia propter cognitionem hanc Ecclesiae. Neque tamen aspicere, considerare, admirari ad sacietatem possunt, Ecclesia enim compraehendit in se Deum, conversantem nobiscum: Ita ut vivificet, custodiat et sanet nos. Et ista cohabitatione hoc operatur, ut sit domus Dei et porta coeli in hac vita."

[169] LW 5.250; WA 43.601: "Et est essentialis definitio: Ecclesia est locus vel populus, ubi Deus habitat, ideo ut faciat nos intrare in regnum coelorum: quia est porta coeli. Et sequitur inde optima consequentia: Ergo in Ecclesia non debet audiri, videri, nisi quod facit Deus, iuxta illud: 'Si quis loquitur, tanquam sermones Dei loquatur: Si quis ministrat, tanquam ex virtute, quam administrat Deus'. Sin autem incertus sum de verbo aut administratione divina, tacendum est. Sed quandocunque ministro, hoc est, baptiso aut absolvo, debeo certus esse, quod meum opus non sit meum: sed Dei operantis per me. Baptismus est operatio Dei: quia non est meus, quanquam accommodo manus et os tanquam instrumenta. Sic quando absolvo te, aut voco ad ministerium, et impono manus, non dubitabis, quin Dei virtus sit, iuxta sententiam Petri. Ut sit integra definitio Ecclesiae, quae est habitatio Dei in terra, non ut in terra maneamus: Sed ideo administrantur Sacramenta, ideo docetur verbum, ut introducamur in regnum coelorum, et per Ecclesiam ingrediamur in coelum."

may enter the kingdom of heaven through it.[170] Luther himself ties all of these points together when he writes:

> … [Jacob] describes the glory of this church in a very magnificent manner by saying that here the entrance to the kingdom of heaven is open. For God governs us in such a way that whenever He speaks with us here on earth, the approach to the kingdom of heaven is open. This is truly extraordinary consolation. Whenever we hear the Word and are baptized, there we enter into eternal life. But where is that place found? On earth, where the ladder which touches heaven stands, where the angels descend and ascend, where Jacob sleeps. It is a physical place, but here there is an ascent into heaven without physical ladders, without wings and feathers. This is how faith speaks: 'I am going to the place where the Word is taught, where the Sacrament is offered and Baptism is administered.' All those things that are done in my sight in a physical place are heavenly and divine words and works. That place is not only ground or earth; but it is something more glorious and majestic, namely, the kingdom of God and the gate of heaven. … [L]ook in faith at the place where the Word and the sacraments are. Direct your step to the place where the Word resounds and the sacraments are administered, and there write the title THE GATE OF GOD. Let this be done either in the church and in the public assemblies or in bedchambers, when we console and buoy up the sick or when we absolve him who sits with us at table. There the gate of heaven is, as Christ says (Matthew 18:20): 'Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them.' Throughout the world the house of God and the gate of heaven is wherever there is the pure teaching of the Word together with the sacraments.[171]

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[170] Ibid.

[171] LW 5.247; WA 43.598-9: "Describit vero gloriam huius Ecclesiae admodum magnifice, videlicet quod pateat ibi introitus in regnum coelorum. Sic enim nos gubernat Deus, ut hic in terris, ubicunque nobiscum loquitur, pateat aditus in regnum coelorum. Haec sane insignis consolatio est: Ubicunque audimus verbum, et baptisamur, ibi ingredimur in vitam aeternam. Ubi vero invenitur locus iste? In terra, ubi stat Scala tangens coelos: ubi Angeli descendunt et ascendunt, ubi dormit Iacob. Est locus corporalis, sed est ibi ascensus in coelum sine scalis materialibus, sine alis et pennis. Fides sic loquitur: Vado ad locum, ubi docetur verbum, ubi porrigitur Sacramentum, administratur Baptismus. Et omnia illa, quae fiunt me vidente in loco corporali, sunt coelestia et divina verba et opera. Non est locus iste tantum humus aut terra, sed est magnificentius et augustius quiddam: nimirum regnum Dei et porta coeli. Hic itur ad astra, ut apud Poetam dicitur: Non est, quod curras ad S. Iacobum, aut in angulum secedas, sive abdas te in Monasterium, ne quaeras novum et stultum introitum: sed fide intuere locum verbi et Sacramentorum. Eo dirige gressum: ubi sonat verbum, et administrantur Sacramenta: Atque ibi adscribe titulum: PORTA DEI. Sive id fiat in templo et publicis congressibus, sive in cubiculis, quando consolamur et erigimus aegrotos, sive assidentem nobis in mensa absolvimus: Ibi est porta coeli. Sicut inquit Christus: 'Ubi sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum': ibi est domus Dei et porta coeli per totum orbem terrarum, ubicunque verbum cum Sacramentis pure docetur."
Cf. Chrysostom, *Homily XXXVI* (I Corinthians 14:20): "For the church is no barber's or perfumer's shop, nor any other merchant's warehouse in the market-place, but a place of angels, a place of archangels, a palace of God, heaven itself. As therefore if one had parted the heaven and had brought thee in thither, though thou shouldest see thy father or they brother, thou wouldest not venture to speak; so neither here

God's presence, God's speech, is an inbreaking of heaven into creation, found within the confines of the church. As Luther acknowledges, the church may be — and often is — a physical place or building. In that place, one can find the true Word taught and the true sacraments given. But he also emphasizes that the church is also where people gather in either God's or Christ's name, no matter if that gathering is in the church building, school, home, or at table. Even in those perhaps unexpected places and situations, God's presence and Word are potentially found. Thus, the church is where one hears the Word of God, where God dwells — and where the angels are.[172]

Luther explicitly states that the angels are present whenever the church is present. In his exegesis of Genesis 45:17-8,[173] Luther writes that Jacob (whom he calls "an angel of God") brought the Word of God with him, no matter where he was — which entailed the presence of God and of the angels. "For where the church is, that same place there is the ministry of the angels …," as Psalm 34:7[174] and 125:2[175] concur. Thus, when Jacob visited Egypt with his sons, Pharaoh gave hospitality not only to Jacob's family, but also the angels and the church of God.[176] And again, the church can simply be where a few

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ought one to utter any other sound but these which are spiritual. For, in truth, the things in this place are also a heaven." NPNF I.12.220.

[172] LW 4.181-2; WA 43.266: "Quia ministerio verbi divini vocor, non in Bethlehem, sed in parochiam ad Ecclesiam, ad audiendum verbum Dei, ibi habitat Deus, ibi sunt custodes Angeli, ibi audio honore esse afficiendos parentes, serviendum vocationi pie et fideliter."

[173] "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Say to your brothers, "Do this: load your animals and go back to the land of Canaan. Take your father and your households and come to me, so that I may give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you may enjoy the fat of the land."'" (NRSV)

[174] "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them." (NRSV)

[175] "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time on and for evermore." (NRSV)

[176] LW 8.60; WA 44.623: "…sed hoc potius nomine suspicere eum debemus, quod fuit patriarcha, propheta et angelus Dei, qui ubicunque ageret, habuit apud se verbum Dei, quod est Deum et angelos secum habere. Ubi enim est Ecclesia, ibidem est et ministerium angelorum, ut testatur Psalmus 34: 'Castra metatur angelus Domini in circuitu timentium eum, et eripiet eos'. Item 125: 'Montes in circuitu eius, et Dominus in circuitu populi sui, ex hoc nunc, et usque in seculum'. Proinde Pharao rex sanctus non excepta ignobilem et contemptum hospitem, cum Iacob et filiis eius hospitium praebuit, sed recepit Ecclesiam Dei et angelorum …"

people are gathered in Christ's name. Yet even then, writes Luther, the angels are present. In fact, even if one person hears the Word, he or she is not truly alone. The angels are present with him or her:[177]

> The place of the church is in the temple, in the school, in the house, and in the bedchamber. Wherever two or three gather in the name of Christ, there God dwells (cf. Matthew 18:20). Indeed, if anyone speaks with himself and meditates on the Word, God is present there with the angels; and He works and speaks in such a way that the entrance into the kingdom of heaven is open.[178]

Again, Luther points to Abraham's household as his example of a true blending of church and home. Because of the way in which the Word can be said to dwell there, Abraham's home is the true church, writes Luther in his exegesis of Genesis 18:20-21.[179] His home is so pleasant and comfortable that even the angels can tease Sarah about her laughter and denial thereof. Thus, Abraham's house "is nothing less than a kingdom of the forgiveness of sins and of grace, yes, a very heaven in which dwell the angels of God…"[180]

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[177] LW 5.247; WA 43.598: "Si enim vel una tantum persona est, quae verbum audit cum Angelis, qui adsunt una, satis est."

[178] LW 5.250-1; WA 43.601: "Estque locus Ecclesiae in templo, in schola, in domo, in cubiculo. Ubicunque duo aut tres conveniunt in nomine Christi, ibi habitat Deus. Imo si quis secum loquitur et meditatur verbum, ibi Deus adest cum Angelis, et sic operatur et loquitur, ut pateat ingressus in regnum coelorum." This quotation from the *Lectures on Genesis* is not the first time Luther commented on God's connection to God's Word being such that God is present wherever the Word is. From a 1522 Christmas Sermon (Church Postils 1.179; "Das Euangelium ynn der hohe Christmesß auß S. Johanne am ersten Capitel." WA 10.I.1.188): "Thus it is also with God. His word is so much like himself, that the Godhead is wholly in it, and he who has the word has the whole Godhead. But this comparison has its limits. For the human word does not carry with it the essence or the nature of the heart, but simply its meaning or is a sign of the heart, just as a woodcut or a bronze tablet does not carry with it the human being, but simply represents it. But here in God, the Word does not only carry with it the sign and picture, but the whole being, and is as full of God as he whose word or picture it is. If the human word were pure heart, or the intention of the heart, the comparison would be perfect. But this cannot be; consequently the Word of God is above every word, and without comparison among all creatures." Cf. Chrysostom, *Homily XII* (Colossians 4:12,13): "If thou drive away all these [things of Satan], even Christ will come to such a marriage, and Christ being present, the choir of Angels is present also." NPNF I.13.320.

[179] "Then the Lord said, 'How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know.'" (NRSV)

[180] LW 3.228; WA 43.38: "Idem hic quoque fit, Abrahae domus est vera Ecclesia, etsi enim vixerunt tum alii quoque Patriarchae, tamen Ecclesia erat divina voce alligata ad domum, posteros et successionem Abrahae. Si igitur instituas collationem domus Abrahae et Sodomorum, invenies in domo Abrahae omnia suavissima et familiarissima: adeo ut ipsi Angeli Dei videantur convivaliter iocari cum Sara ridente, et

And so, what we have seen is this: for Luther, according to what he writes in his *Lectures on Genesis*, the church is certainly a place to which one can go to receive the Word and the sacraments. But it is so much more than that. In the church, one finds the inbreaking of heaven into creation. Perhaps, it would be even more accurate to say that Luther believed that this inbreaking *i*s the church. The division between the present, physical life and the future, heavenly life is abolished, because God literally dwells there and establishes the means by which one moves from one to the other. And in this heaven, one finds the angels, present at all times to the church, participating in the work of God in creation alongside humanity. Thus, we see that Luther believed that there was no division between the church of the angels and the church of humanity; instead, he believed that there is one heavenly church on earth, to which both angels and humanity belong.

IV.2.4. A Conclusion

Much like his thoughts on human-angel relationship, Luther's vision of the manner in which angels relate to the church was formed in the early stage of his career, yet became more refined and increasingly complex.

Before 1526, Luther did not have much to say on the subject. He mentions the angels' support of Christians' prayers and their preaching. But he also established two principles to which he would often return in later years: that when Christians gather to worship or practice their faith, the angels are present, and participate alongside humanity within the church. During the years 1526-1535, Luther draws the connection between angels and the church tighter, emphasizing the angels' celebration at what the church

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negante risum. Sonat igitur perpetuo ibi Dei vox, et est domus Abrahae aliud nihil, quam regnum remissionis peccatorum et gratiae, imo ipsum coelum, in quo habitant Angeli Dei, quos reverenter excipit, et adorat in eis Deum, quem novit et credit unum et trinum. In summa apud Abrahamum nihil est, quam gratia et vita."

does, sharing in the church's joy. We also see, in this period, Luther beginning to explore the idea of the church as the place where heaven and earth truly meet, where angels and humanity not only worship together, but exist together as equals.

But in the final period of his life, Luther takes his vision of the church even further, characterizing it as the place where heaven breaks into earth. This inbreaking, he argues, occurs whenever Christians gather to worship, whether in an actual church building or within the home, or even when they live their lives in a Christ-like fashion. When they do these things, Christ is present to them — and the angels are as well. In those moments, Christians and angels truly exist together within the church they share. Heaven and earth are there one and the same, Luther preaches, and in heaven, there is no division between Christian and angel. And within the church, there is no division between heaven and earth. The church comes together in those moments as a union of the human and the angelic, established and linked by the Word of God.

"Lord God, we all to Thee give praise,
Thanksgivings meet to Thee we raise,
That angel hosts Thou didst create,
Around Thy glorious throne to wait.

They shine with light and heavenly grace,
And constantly behold Thy face;
They heed Thy voice, they know it well,
In godly wisdom they excel.

They never rest nor sleep as we;
Their whole delight is but to be with
Thee, Lord Jesus, and to keep
Thy little flock, Thy lambs and sheep.

But watchful is the angel band,
That follows Christ on every hand,
To guard His people where they go,
And break the counsel of the Foe.

For this, now and in days to be,
Our praise shall rise, O Lord, to Thee,
Whom all the angel hosts adore,
With grateful songs forevermore."

— Philip Melanchthon, "Lord God, We All to Thee Give Praise" (Verses 1, 2, 3, 7, 8)[1]

Conclusion: Further Directions, Further Questions

As I stated in the Introduction, my overarching goal in writing this dissertation was to present to my readers as complete a picture of Luther's understanding of the angels as possible. In doing so, I have argued in support of four main conclusions:

1) Martin Luther has an angelology.

Scattered throughout his corpus, in works written for any number of reasons or on any sort of occasion, we find references to the angels. And these are more than simple comments or allusions — we find Luther making definitive theological statements about

[1] Lutheran Hymnal #254 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1941).

the beings he sees as the most powerful and gracious servants of God. The depth of his angelology reveals that he faithfully and intentionally considered the four basic questions of angelology which I have proposed: 1) What are the angels?; 2) What is their role in the order of Creation?; 3) What is the nature of their relationship with humanity?; and 4) What is the nature of their relationship with the Church?

But perhaps even more important is that Luther was unable to answer any one of these questions without drawing on his own ideas regarding the other three. For example, in Luther's mind, the angelic nature and the angelic office are inseparable from each other, even though he may not always have been sure how, exactly, they are intertwined. For him, what the angels are and what the angels do make them who they are, and shape their relationship with us, and with God's church. And in his mind, these relationships, in turn, reveal to us who and what the angels truly are.

2) Luther knew the prior angelological tradition, and remained in conversation with it throughout his life.

Each of the eight theologians I discussed in Chapter I is a man whose work Luther read and knew — and each of them provided him with an angelology to incorporate into his own. Certainly, there were occasions on which Luther was candid about his frustration and distrust of the tradition — his statements regarding Pseudo-Dionysius are often pointed to as archetypal of his disdain for medieval theology, with those against Thomas Aquinas and the "scholastics" cited often as well. But even the great Augustine was not immune to criticism, such as in the *Lectures on Genesis*, when Luther characterizes him as "toying with ill-timed allegories," regarding when the angels were

created.[2] Nonetheless, by examining the angelologies of each figure, we have gained a sense of the theological landscape in which Luther dwelt and from which he formulated his own.

To what "school," then, does Luther belong? How should we categorize his angelology? The difficulty in answering this question with absolute surety is that Luther himself does not often name those from whom he is drawing in the moment. Even so, we have examined enough of Luther's angelology to be able to pick upon echoes of the voices to whom he listened most often – or at least, whose work his own thoughts most closely resemble. Thus, I offer two statements for consideration — both of which will likely not be surprising, given the axiomatic conclusions of modern Luther studies.

First, to force a dichotomy between 'patristic' and 'medieval' into Luther's angelology is to overly simplify the complexity of Luther's relationship with his prior tradition. Luther listened to and interacted with each of our eight theologians, no matter in what period they wrote – to him, they were the influential voices of his tradition (even when, eventually, he came to disagree with them). And thus, we find Luther speaking in ways that reveal his medieval training and context, calling the angels "form," discussing Adam's and the angels' knowledge of causality, delineating God's power in nominalist terms. We therefore cannot argue that Luther's angelology has nothing in common with that of the great medieval theologians. However, we can argue Luther's angelology has more in common with that of the early church than that of the medieval church. Though he knew the thoughts of the important figures of the era that immediately preceded him, he remained comparatively unconcerned with the questions the writers of that period emphasized. Despite having consulted Aquinas and Bonaventure on the angels and

[2] As noted in Chapter II.3.1.

incorporated their thoughts into his vision, Luther was nonetheless unable to reconcile much of their philosophical conclusions with his own thinking, due to such conclusions' distance from the simplicity of the Biblical text. This distance served as his main criticism of Pseudo-Dionysius as well. For the medieval thinkers, what was important to know about the angels was how they fit into the ontological and cosmological framework their intellectual and philosophical tools had constructed; they were interested in the *what* of the angels. While Luther certainly considered such questions and formed his own answers, he concerned himself more with the *who* of the angels. In this, he shares his concerns with Augustine, Chrysostom, and the other theologians of the early church.

Likewise, trying to define a "school" to which Luther belongs is equally difficult. As is true for any theologian, the many influences and aspects of context that came together to form Luther's thought are inseparable and interpenetrative.[3] Thus it is with caution that I say Luther's angelology is "Augustinian," despite the problematic nature of such a claim, as we have seen. Whether he learned Augustine's angelology from Augustine's own writings, the teachings of his own contemporaries, or through transmission by the other authors we explored in Chapter I, Luther's thoughts on angels more closely parallels Augustine's than any other of our eight. From the confirmation of the angels, to the ways in which humanity and the angels cooperate in carrying out God's will in Creation, to the blurring of lines between humanity and the angels in heaven, to humanity's existence between angels and beasts — all of these concepts appear in Augustine's work and are echoed by Luther. But a close second would have to be

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[3] For example, in an essay on the beginnings of the Reformation, Heiko Oberman notes that, "… humanism, nominalism, and Augustinianism do not reach Luther as three separate and unrelated forces." Heiko A. Oberman, "Headwaters of the Reformation: *Initia Lutheri – Initia Reformationis*," in *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era: Papers for the Fourth International Congress for Luther Research,* ed. Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 83.

Chrysostom. Luther's indebtedness to Chrysostom's theology is an area of Luther studies that has not seen much work. But here, in his angelology, we find a great deal of similarity between the two thinkers. The angelic nature of prelapsarian humanity, the dual nature of Christian life, and the nature of the church and worship service as an inbreaking of heaven into Creation are all themes that we find in both Chrysostom's and Luther's angelology. And at all points in Luther's career, we find traces of these two theologians' thought, from the *Lectures on Hebrews* in 1517 to the *Lectures on Genesis* in the last decade of his life.

3) Luther's angelology was an important part of his theological framework, at all points in his career.

Though he never wrote a work that dealt with angels in any systematic way, Luther clearly believed that angels are an integral part of not only life, but also theology. In our survey, we have seen evidence of this, and have touched on many of the places where angels pop up in the midst of a discussion of another facet of theology. While we have not had the space thus far in which to engage in a deeper discussion of such occasions, we can delve a bit more deeply here.

But why do so? Would adding the angels back into the mix not simply complicate matters? Have they not been left behind for a reason? Leaving aside the simple fact that Luther speaks of angels constantly, one most fundamental concern is that scholarship must take the angels into account as part of Luther's worldview, because to continue to refuse to do so is to prevent us from coming to a deeper understanding of such an important historical figure and influential theologian. Reconsidering angels as a factor in Luther's theology, I feel, would not complicate matters — doing so would enrich his

theology, returning to it a sense of the larger spiritual existence in which Luther so clearly and concretely believed and lived.

That larger task must necessarily wait until further projects can address it. In the meantime, I would like to present short discussions of the implications of reintroducing angels as a factor in three areas of Luther studies: his apocalypticism, his concept of the order of Creation, and his ecclesiology.

Con.1. Apocalypticism

Regarding Luther's apocalypticism, Robin Barnes presents an excellent treatment in the first chapter of his book.[4] There, we find a Luther preoccupied with the decline of history and the simultaneous hope and fear for the world. And as he grows older, Barnes argues (citing Edwards), Luther grew increasingly frustrated with the state of the world. We have caught glimpses of this frustration over the course of our survey. Barnes also summarizes Luther's exegesis of Daniel and of Revelations, as well as Luther's thoughts on the Antichrist, which he calls "central to Luther's eschatological understanding."[5] What is missing from Barnes's analysis is any mention of the role that the angels played in Luther's worldview in this context.

We find a contrast to this in Maxfield's text on Luther's *Lectures on Genesis*, in which he includes a small section on the angels.[6] There, he discusses Luther's exegesis of both Genesis 19 and 32, which he categorizes as evidence of Luther's apocalyptic worldview, in which the angels are the spiritual warriors of God in the cosmic battle

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[4] Robin Bruce Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 30-53.
[5] Ibid., 44.
[6] John A. Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2008), 181-5.

against Satan, and the protectors of Christians. Yet, Maxfield's ultimate point is to emphasize Luther's belief in this cosmic conflict, and his confidence that God remains in ultimate control as ultimate sovereign. For Maxfield, the angels are only important as evidence of God's governance.

What both of these authors have in common is that they emphasize the notion of the Devil and/or the struggle against evil in Luther's apocalyptic and eschatological thought. The angels are barely mentioned, which leads to a skewed view of Luther, highlighting his frustration and despair in the face of the evil of the world. While Luther was certainly convinced of the fact of evil and decay in the world, we can also see a certain kind of hope in his writings — a hope fed and maintained by his surety of the presence of the angels in Christian life, who serve as protectors, ministers, friends, and examples. A more balanced view of Luther's apocalypticism would try to take this hope into account and examine the role of the angels as agents of this hope, both in Luther's theology and in the belief and piety of the early Protestant church.

Con.2. "gubernat et conservat": the Order of Creation

What Althaus,[7] Bayer,[8] Bornkamm,[9] Cranz,[10] Estes,[11] Lohse,[12] Tonkin,[13] and Wright[14] have in common is that they leave the angels completely out of their

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[7] Paul Althaus. *The Theology of Martin Luther*. Translated by Robert C. Schultz. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966).
[8] Oswald Bayer. *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*. Translated by Thomas H. Trapp. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).
[9] Heinrich Bornkamm. *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms in the Context of His Theology*. Translated by Karl H. Hertz. Social Ethics Series 14. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966).
[10] F. Edward Cranz. *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law, and Society*. Harvard Theological Studies 19. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).
[11] James M. Estes. *Peace, Order, and the Glory of God: Secular Authority and the Church in the Thought of Luther and Melanchthon 1518-1559*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions: History, Culture, Religion, Ideas 111. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005).
[12] Bernard Lohse. *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*. Translated by Roy A. Harrisville. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999).

explanations of Luther's concept of the order of Creation. Whether they are talking about "two kingdoms" or "three estates," they most often seem to equate the term "spiritual" with "Christian church," forgoing all notion of spiritual beings as participants and actors in God's created order. But as we have clearly seen, Luther emphatically believed in the role of the angels within Creation.

Why, then, are angels left out? Perhaps, as Wright argues, the "two kingdoms" doctrine has become overly politicized,[15] with the result that humanity's place in the order has been emphasized — and the resultant corrective reassessment has had the same problem: both are trying to help humanity to understand itself. But I think also that one culprit is scholarship's need to preserve the fundamentality of Luther's belief in the ultimate sovereignty of God. If, as Janz points out,[16] Luther says, "God does everything [God]self," why worry about the angels?

We need to take the angels in Luther's thought into account for that very reason: he says that God does everything — and that God does so through the angels. At all points in his career, Luther argues that when God wants something done, God sends the angels to do it. By taking Luther's assertions seriously, we will gain a greater insight into his concept of his ordering of Creation, from the ways in which humanity and the angels exist in relationship to each other to how he understands causality. But perhaps more important is that by studying the angels as they appear in Luther's thought, we can also gain an insight into the way *God* appears in Luther's thought, because to understand the

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[13] John Tonkin. *The Church and the Secular Order in Reformation Thought*. (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1971).
[14] William J. Wright. *Martin Luther's Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism*.)Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).
[15] Noted above in III.2.1.
[16] See I.1.7. above.

angels is to understand how God chooses to act in Creation. I think that the idea behind that statement is one with which Luther would agree.

Con.3. Ecclesiology

The problem of angels in Luther's ecclesiology is similar to the problem of their role in Creation: scholarship has failed to take them into account. Each of the authors mentioned in the previous section leaves angels out of the discussion when commenting on Luther's understanding of the nature of the church, despite the fact that they also tend to equate "spiritual" with "church" when discussing the "two kingdoms." Or, if their focus is on the "three estates," they speak only of humanity's experience of the estates.

Why are the angels left out of discussions of ecclesiology? One likely reason is that scholarship remains conscious of the Reformers' deep fear that worship *with* angels could so easily become worship *of* angels.[17] While this insight is correct, it too often serves as a summary of the Reformers' thoughts on angels in the church. Another reason is that the Reformers were also committed to removing any sort of theological or devotional impediment between God and believer, and so the notion of angels as mediators was cast aside. Again, while scholarship has correctly picked up on this, what we do not see represented is the more nuanced view that Luther and others held: that rather than impediments, angels can and do serve as intermediaries and support between God and believer.

What these authors are also clear about is that, for Luther, the Church is defined by the presence of the Word, as we saw in Chapter IV.2. But Luther is likewise clear that where the Word is, God is — and the angels as well. If the Word preached and shared

[17] See Raymond, *Milton's Angels*, 14.

brings the church into being, then the angels are necessarily there. And, if the church is an inbreaking of heaven into earth[18] as indications suggest, then the presence of the angels, as heavenly citizens, makes sense as members of the church. Acknowledging and emphasizing the presence of these spiritual realities would, I think, return to Luther a sense of the wonder that he felt when he thought about and preached about the church, a wonder that he tried so very hard to communicate to his listeners.

But we should return to the final statement this dissertation has made regarding Luther's angelology:

4) Luther's concern, when speaking about the angels, was as a pastor, first and foremost.

Luther did consider and answer the more philosophical, intellectual questions on the subject of the angels, and he did so in a way that revealed the seriousness and respect with which he approached not only the subject itself, but also the tradition that came before him. Certainly, he believed such questions were worth consideration. Even so, Luther's hope, constantly reiterated throughout the periods of his life, was that his listeners would come to know the angels — not on an intellectual level, but on an emotional and relational level, to know not *what* the angels are, but *who* the angels are. And this fact is at the heart of his criticism of the angelology of the medieval period: those theologians could tell us about the substance of the angels, about their make-up, about where they might fit into any number of hierarchies, but all such considerations pale in comparison with what the Bible can teach us about who the angels are.[19] For

[18] Another interesting concept in Luther's ecclesiology that is worthy of further exploration, I think.
[19] See my treatment of Janz on Luther's criticism of Thomas Aquinas, in II.1.7.

Luther, when the medievals categorized and hierarchized the angels, they almost completely stripped away what made the angels awesome, wondrous, and real.

This line of thinking leads me to a final observation, one which I had while writing one of my sections on Augustine. In modern intellectual and theological thought, very little emphasis is placed on the angels. They simply are not mentioned, outside of rote recitals of various parts of worship services, and if someone does, any response is met with incredulity. The angels, it seems, are no longer necessary.

I do not choose to place blame, to point fingers at the positions of which I have been, and continue to be, critical. All of the authors I have read for this dissertation have had important, valid, and valuable things to say and contributions to make. But I think the reason that the angels are not seen as necessary is because, in the current intellectual climate, the only way we are capable of understanding and intellectually appreciating them is if we can pigeonhole them into categories that are comfortable for us. In many ways, we can only know them if we emphasize their similarities and equalities with us, if we draw them down to our level — and if they are merely just like us, they are therefore redundant. In a strange way, this emphasis on similarity and category depersonalizes and distances them from us — and if they are distant from us, they cannot have any impact on us.

In reading the angelologies of the previous tradition, what I have seen is that, for the theologians of those periods, the opposite is true. Yes, they and their followers wished to know and understand the angels, and to help others do likewise. But their goal and their method was not to bring the angels down to our level — but to show us that the angels wish to bring us up to their level. To know the angels, for them, is not to

understand what intellectual box into which they fit, or the ways in which they are the same as we are: to know the angels is to know that because they are beings of such unimaginable power, unending love, and perfect humility, their only wish is to bring us up to where they are. The angels exist to help us to become more than we are. And for Luther, that is enough. With him, may we pray:

> "For into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen."[20]

[20] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord: The Conessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 364.; "Der kleine Catechismus," WA 30.I.323: "Denn ich befelhe mich, mein leib und seele und alles ynn deine hende, Dein heiliger Engel sey mit mir, das der boese feind keine macht an mir finde, Amen."

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